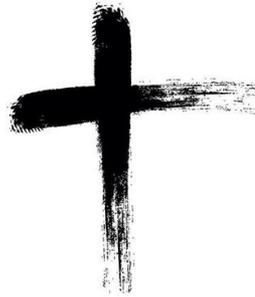




Spirit & Truth

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

Sunday worship: 9 am & 10:30 am

Dial-A-Prayer: 954.462.2006 (ext.6)

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 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.*

Sunshine Cathedral Spiritual Principles

1. There is an omnipresent Life that we call "God" and we are all a part of (and never apart from) It.
2. Since we are each a part of and are expressions of divine Life, all people have sacred value.
3. Habitual thoughts and attitudes influence our experience of life.
4. A miracle is a change of perception from fear to love and miracles are always possible.
5. Prayer is conscious unity (comm-union) with God and can offer peace, hope, and joy.

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.

Sunshine Cathedral Values

Inclusion. Compassion. Spiritual Transformation. Social Action.

The Sunshine Cathedral Message

All people have sacred value.

God is omnipresent Love.

Rooted in the Christian tradition and the Gay Rights Movement, we are an inclusive church for ALL kinds of people.

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 Affirmation of Faith

(based on the Apostles Creed):

"I believe in God, the Good,

and in the message and mission of God's anointed prophet, Jesus the Wayshower,

who was born of Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was executed for empowering the powerless and restoring the dignity of the marginalized,

and yet he lives in our hearts and ministry.

I believe in the omnipresent power of divine Love, in the Blessed

Community, in the sacred value of all people,

and in life without end. Amen."

Sunshine Cathedral Sacraments & Rites

Sacraments

Hospitality (Eucharist)

Belonging (Baptism)

Sharing (Tithing)

Rites

Matrimony

Responsibility (Confirmation)

Ordination

Healing

Showing Us the Way...

Spiritual Heroes

January 7: Alethea Brooks Small (1848 – 1906) – sister of Nona Brooks and Fannie Brooks James (early pioneers in the Divine Science movement). She encouraged Nona in her early leadership of Divine Science. Her husband was a business partner of Charles Fillmore before Charles & Myrtle founded Silent Unity.

January 13: George Fox (1624-1691)—Founder of the Society of Friends (Quakers). Fox taught that Christians should live simply, not swear any oaths, not make distinctions of social class, and to oppose war and violence. He opposed the use of formal forms of worship. The measure of a person’s faith was not in theology or even the Bible, but in their own personal spiritual experience. His followers became known as Quakers, a group which represented the left wing of Puritanism that believed in a divine, Inward Light (“that of God” in every person).

January 14: George Berkeley (1685 – 1753) - an Irish philosopher and Anglican bishop. He believed that God is spiritual substance, and everything that is must be made of the same spiritual substance. He wrote, **“What [humans] thought to be substance is actually an idea in the mind of God.”**

January 16: Phineas Quimby (1802 – 1866) - generally considered the father of the New Thought movement. He spoke of the “Christ Principle” and considered Jesus to be an inspired soul. He said that mind as matter and mind as invisible essence (or solution) are controlled by a Superior Wisdom, which Jesus understood. Long before Einstein discovered that energy and mass are equal, identical and interchangeable, Quimby was saying that mind as form and mind as solution (or essence) was the same thing. Quimby was known as a healer. He reasoned that dis-ease is really a belief and beliefs can be changed. To change the underlying thought is to change the condition. He described his healing hypothesis in these words, **“the trouble is in the mind, for the body is only the house for the mind to dwell in . . . If your mind has been deceived by some invisible enemy into a belief, you have put it into the form of a disease, with or without your knowledge...I come in contact with your enemy and restore you to health and happiness.”**

January 19: H. B. Jeffery (1872 – 1954) - Studied with Malinda E. Cramer, Emma Curtis Hopkins and Thomas Troward. He worked with Emma Curtis Hopkins on *High Mysticism*, and taught courses based on Hopkins' work. His own books include *Spirit of Prayer*, *Fruit of the Spirit*, and *Coordination*. Jeffery taught, "God is the One Good. Thus goodwill is the Will of God manifest in [us]."

January 20: St. Sebastian (d. 288) – victimized by the persecutions of the Emperor Diocletian. Sebastian was "executed" by arrows, but somehow survived and was miraculously healed by a woman named Irene. When the newly revived Sebastian went to the emperor to confront him (feeling, apparently, immortal after his last brush with death), the emperor had him beaten to death on the spot. In art, Sebastian is often depicted as beautiful, athletic, nearly nude, pierced by arrows, taking joy in his faithfulness but also suffering agony because of his mistreatment. Gay men often identify with the paintings of Sebastian and relate the picture to their own life experiences.

January 21: St. Agnes (d. 304?)— Traditionally, a young teenager from a wealthy Roman family who refused to marry or to worship non-Christian deities. She was condemned first to brothel, and then to death.

January 22: Alexander Men (1935-1990)—Russian Orthodox priest and martyr. As Russia entered a phase of rapid change under Gorbachev, reactionary forces murdered him with an ax blow to his head while on his way to church.

January 24: St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622)—Bishop of Geneva, a stronghold of Protestant Calvinism where Catholics were persecuted. Rather than respond defensively, Francis chose to demonstrate love and self-sacrifice in the face of hatred. He helped found an order in which women, rather than living separate cloistered lives, became engaged in helping people in need. He taught that the path to holiness was open to lay persons in the world, not just the clergy. He is known as the patron saint of writers.

Jan 24: Florence Li-Tim Oi (1907 – 1992) - the first woman ordained to the priesthood in the Anglican Communion (Hong Kong, Jan. 24, 1944).

January 25: Apostle Paul – Thirteen books of the New Testament claim to be written by the Apostle Paul (and a fourteenth was once thought to be written by Paul as well). Today, scholarly consensus is that Paul actually only wrote seven epistles that made it into the New Testament. His writings predate the gospels.

The First Letter to the Thessalonians is thought to be the oldest book in the New Testament. According to scripture, Paul was a lay scholar who violently opposed the Jesus Movement but who on the Damascus Road had a mystical experience of Christ and thereafter claimed to be an Apostle commissioned by the Risen Christ to call others to follow the Christ-Way.

January 26: **Ss. Timothy & Titus** – Companions of the Apostle Paul. The first and second letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus in the New Testament are traditionally considered to be authored by Paul. We now believe that those three letters were written 50-100 years after the Apostle Paul's death.

January 27: **St. John Chrysostom (349-407)** - Archbishop of Constantinople, Early Church Father. He is known for the *Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*. The Eastern Orthodox, together with the Byzantine Catholics, hold him in special regard. In the Roman Catholic Church he is recognized as a Doctor of the Church. The Coptic Church also recognizes him as a saint.

January 28: **St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 CE – 1274 CE)** – Theologian and Dominican Friar. His *Summa Theologiae* was the first attempt to write a complete, systematic theology. He was influenced by the Greek philosophy of Aristotle.

January 30: **Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869 – 1948)** – Proponent of non-violent resistance to systems of oppression. His philosophy and activism sparked the movement for Indian independence from Great Britain. He was a Hindu but also an admirer of Jesus Christ (though he rejected the dogmatic claims of Christianity) and his example inspired U.S. Civil Rights Leader Martin Luther King, Jr.

February 2: **Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Candlemas)**—Today remembers the story of Jesus' parents taking him into the Temple, where he was blessed by Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:22-40). This reminds us of the Jewish law (Exodus 13:2; 22:29) that every firstborn son was to be dedicated in memory of the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. In some traditions candles are brought to the church on this day to be blessed.

Madonna of Montevergine - In the 13th century two young men in southern Italy were in love. They tried to keep their relationship secret, but one cold and gloomy winter day in 1256, they were spotted holding hands and kissing on the way to Mass. A crowd (which became an angry mob) attacked them, stripped them naked, and tied them to a tree near the Shrine of the Madonna of Montevergine. Naked, cold, surrounded by snow and ice, they were left to freeze to death. According to legend, the Madonna of

Montevergine was moved by the men's love for each other. She sent unexpected sunshine to warm the lovers. Soon, they were able to free themselves. Some accounts say that the couple celebrated by making love on the spot! Because of this miracle, the community allowed the men to live openly as a couple. The community was transformed into a place of tolerance toward sexual minorities. Every year on Candlemas, pilgrims to the Shrine of the Madonna include gender-bending devotees of Mary, known as "femminielli."

February 3: **St. Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167)**—Cistercian abbot. Aelred wrote freely of his feelings for his friends and fellow monks. While it is not known if he had any romantic relationships, it is clear that he was strongly attracted to men. He had a very positive attitude toward creation and humanity, and was comfortable embracing his own feminine side. He developed a theology of friendship, and is today the patron saint of *Integrity*, a lesbian and gay organization for Episcopalians.

February 4: **Cornelius the Centurion**—The story of Cornelius is told in Acts 10-11. He was an important military leader and a deeply religious person who was interested in Judaism. His story is significant in the growth of the early church because he and his family were among the first Gentile converts, thereby opening the door for the message of Jesus to spread throughout the Roman Empire. His story is significant for gay and lesbian people because of Peter's vision, which led him to go to Caesarea and visit this Gentile home. This vision led Peter to understand that, despite the laws of Leviticus, there was a higher law of love: "God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean."

February 5: **St. Agatha (231 – 251)** – a Sicilian saint who was considered to be very beautiful as a young woman. She dedicated herself to a life of prayer, a "consecrated virgin." One nobleman decided that he would persuade her to marry him. She rebuffed all his advances, and he eventually turned her in for being a Follower of the Christ Way. She was brought before a judge who just happened to be the very nobleman who turned her in for practicing her underground faith. He offered to drop the charges if she would marry him. She refused. He sentenced her to a brothel. After being terrified in the brothel, the nobleman offered to release her if she married him. She again refused and he sentenced her to prison and to torture. She was whipped, burned, and her breasts were removed. Despite such agonizing treatment, she never agreed to marry her

tormentor. One night she had a vision of St. Peter whose intercessions, she believed, helped her wounds to heal.

Eventually, however, she did die. Her intercessions are now thought to benefit women with breast cancer, nursing mothers, people who have been injured by fire, and women who have been assaulted. In art, she is often shown holding breasts on a plate.

February 8: Martin Buber (1878-1965)— Jewish philosopher and theologian. Buber had a strong impact in reminding Christianity of its Jewish origins. He wrote that Jesus exemplified the highest ethical and spiritual ideals of Judaism. He was a champion of interfaith dialogue. He was influenced by the Hasidic movement in Eastern Europe and he believed that Jews and Arabs could find a just way to live together.

February 9: Helen Schucman (1909 – 1981) – a professor of clinical psychology at Columbia University in NYC for 18 years (retiring in 1976). Faculty meetings were increasingly acrimonious and Helen and her friend and colleague, Bill Thetford were beginning to dread them. Bill said to Helen, “*There must be another way.*” Soon after, Helen started receiving “inner dictation” (which she believed was coming from Jesus himself) and she started writing it down. The result is *A Course in Miracles*. The *Course* encourages people to love, forgive, believe in the absolute goodness and lovingness of God, and to release fear. By following the *Course*’s guidelines, students of the *Course* believe that inner peace and lasting joy are possible. The *Course* seems to blend therapeutic principles, Christian verbiage, and Eastern philosophy. It can be (and is) practiced by people of various faith traditions (and none). The *Course* teaches: “**Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God.**”

February 11: Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes

Feb 11: Fanny Jane Crosby (1820-1915)—Hymn writer and musician. Though she went blind at six weeks of age, Fanny Crosby became one of the most prolific hymn writers in America. She eventually wrote more than 8,000 hymns. Among those that have been deeply loved include: “Blessed Assurance,” “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior,” & “To God be the Glory.”

February 12: Brother Lawrence (1614 – 1691) – at about the age of 40, former soldier turned valet “Nicholas Herman” joined the Carmelite order in France and would then be known as “Lawrence of the Resurrection” or “Brother Lawrence.” He was a simple, barefoot monk. He spent most of his monastic career working in the monastery kitchen, and in his final

years repaired sandals (a barefoot monk repairing sandals so others could walk in comfort was apparently very in character for Brother Lawrence). He was known for his peaceful demeanor and happy nature. He developed a form of praying from the heart, of being in constant communion with the divine, that he called “practicing the presence of God.” People would write to him or visit him for spiritual guidance. After Lawrence died, Father Joseph de Beaufort gathered many of Lawrence’s letters and published them as *The Practice of the Presence of God, which is a text still appreciated by Protestants and Catholics alike.*

Feb 12: Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) - born in Prussia and became a professor of logic and metaphysics. He separated the historical Jesus and the mystical Christ.

February 13: Ss. Polyeuct & Nearchus (3rd century) - Nearchus was Christian, but Polyeuct was not. Polyeuct converted from paganism to Christianity for Nearchus. In 259 Polyeuct was martyred by decapitation. Shortly before he was executed, he spoke his last words to Nearchus: “Remember our secret vow.” Thus Polyeuct is known as a protector of vows and avenger of broken promises.

Feb 13: Absalom Jones (1746 – 1818) - a former slave that would become the first African American Episcopal Priest in the newly formed United States of America. Jones preached that God was a loving Parent who always took the side of “the oppressed and distressed.”

February 14: St. Valentine (d. 269)—Martyr. Though St. Valentine has long since removed from the lists of ‘official’ saints, Valentine’s Day has been taken over by the greeting card industry and become fixed in the popular calendar of most people. It seems to have its origins in England, where it was noted that birds began to pair and mate around the feast of St. Valentine. The original Valentine was likely a Christian priest in Rome who was beheaded for refusing to renounce his faith. He gave his heart to God, his divine lover.

Feb 14: James A. Pike (1913 – 1969) - early proponent of ordination of women, racial desegregation, and the acceptance of LGBT people in the Church. He was the Bishop of California in The Episcopal Church. He held two law degrees from Yale and a seminary degree from Union Theological Seminary in NYC. Pike invited Martin Luther King Jr. to speak at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco in 1965 following his march to Selma. After his son’s untimely death, Pike became interested in the paranormal (he even

tried to reach his late son through psychics). He died in the Israeli desert while researching a book he wanted to write (coincidentally, about Jesus wandering in the desert). His rented car got stuck and he and his wife Diane tried to walk to safety, but were farther away from any community than they realized. While wandering lost in the desert, Pike fell down a steep canyon where he died. Diane found help and survived.

February 16: Janani Luwum (1924-1977)—Anglican Archbishop of Uganda and martyr. Luwum was Archbishop of Uganda during the dictatorship of General Idi Amin. Luwum realized the church could not stand silently by as Amin’s paranoid reign of terror led to the murder of tens of thousands. He was confronted with trumped up charges, and when ordered to sign a confession he responded by praying. This sent Amin into a rage, and he drew a pistol and executed Luwum himself.

February 17: **Giordano Bruno (1548 – 1600)** - taught that God is everywhere imminent throughout the universe. Bruno was an Italian poet and philosopher who wrote, **“God is the Principle of unity in all activity and is the Principle of Oneness...”** Referring to divine Mind, he held that Mind and matter are one.

February 18: Martin Luther (1483-1546)—Reformer of the Church. Originally trained as a lawyer, Luther was ordained a priest and taught theology at the University of Wittenberg. Luther was also a musician, and his most famous hymn was “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.”

February 20: Frederick Douglass (1818-1895)— Abolitionist. Born into slavery, Douglass managed to escape to the North and freedom. There he became a champion of the abolitionist movement as he lectured across the United States and Europe. He was noted for his amazing oratorical skills. Although a lay preacher in the AME Zion church, he became increasingly critical of the silence of much of Christianity regarding slavery.

February 24: Apostle Matthias – an apostle chosen by the other apostles (rather than by Jesus) to replace Judas Iscariot.

February 25: Felix Varela (1788-1853)— Cuban priest and theologian. Long revered as a champion of justice in his native Cuba, Varela spent most of his ministry in exile in New York, having argued for the independence of Cuba from Spain, and the abolition of slavery. He was the first Hispanic

theologian in the US, and died in St. Augustine, Florida.

March 2: John and Charles Wesley (1703-1791, 1707-1788)—Anglican priests and founders of Methodism. When thrown out of local churches for being too “enthusiastic” they turned to preaching on the streets.

John created a synthesis of sacramental faith, a personal religion of the heart, and an active concern for social justice.

Charles is remembered for writing over 6,000 hymn texts, including “Christ the Lord is risen today,” “O for a thousand tongues to sing,” and “Hark the herald angels sing.”

March 5: Karl Rahner (1904-1984)—Theologian. Probably the most influential Catholic theologian of the 20th century, Rahner was a Jesuit who worked to build bridges between Christian faith and the modern world. He believed that all human existence was rooted in the holy and infinite mystery of God. He tried to reduce the divisions between faith and science, the church and the world, and emphasized grace as a relationship. He played a critical role in the Second Vatican Council.

March 6: Nona Brooks (1861 – 1945) – a major figure in the New Thought movement and one of the pioneers of Divine Science. Nona taught, **“We no longer feel that we must overcome God’s reluctance, but rather that we are to lay hold of [God’s] willingness. More willing is [God] to give than we are to receive.”** She also stressed divine Omnipresence: **“...let us turn to our Basis, Omnipresence. This means God everywhere; therefore God includes me.”**

March 7: Ss. Perpetua and Felicity (d. 203)—Martyrs. Perpetua, who came from a wealthy family in North Africa, and Felicity, her friend and servant, were martyred at Carthage during a period of Roman persecutions. Despite the pleadings of her family and the prospect of being torn apart by savage animals, Perpetua refused to renounce her Christian faith. In death they comforted each other, and in one final act before the jeering crowds they kissed each other. Writings about their death were wildly popular in the early church, and are important for reflecting the perspective of an independent woman of faith who claimed her own identity and vocation despite the demands of a patriarchal society.

Mar 7: Paramahansa Yogananda (1883 – 1952) – a spiritual teacher who emphasized each individual’s ability to experience Truth for herself or

himself rather than relying on inherited or “blind” belief. He believed every individual has the ability to experience the Divine directly and should rely on that experience more than on religious dogma. Yogananda wrote, “As long as you are making the effort, God will never let you down!”

March 8: Annie Rix Miltz (1856 – 1924) - was the founder of both the New Thought publication *Master Mind* magazine and the Homes of Truth. Miltz wrote, “**We trust God not only as our physician, but as our banker, our defender, as our [spouse], our [parent], our all in all...**”

March 9: Mikao Usui (1865 – 1926) - the founder of the complementary healing technique known as “Reiki” (universal life-force energy). Reiki practitioners allow themselves to be a channel of Universal Life-force Energy, imagining symbols as they place hands on or near certain spots of a person’s body (they also give “distant treatments” for people far away). Practitioners share the energy but remain detached from the outcome. They trust the energy will flow freely to accomplish whatever is most needed. The principles Reiki practitioners try to live by are simply: “**Do not be angry. Do not worry. Be grateful. Work with diligence. Be kind to people.**” Reiki is not a religion and can be practiced by people of any or no faith tradition.

Mar 9: A.K. Mozumdar (1864 – 1953) - Born in India, Mozumdar came to the U.S. to teach his understanding of spiritual principles. Mozumdar's beliefs about the connection between the mind and the body are now widely shared by both religious and secular thinkers. Mozumdar taught that God is within us, inseparable from us. Mozumdar’s quotes include: “**That which you imagine with a positive assurance becomes a reality to you**” and “**Convince yourself that you have the ability to do a certain thing, and you will have the ability.**” Ernest Holmes was a friend and admirer of Mozumdar.

March 10: Harriet Tubman (1820?-1913)—Abolitionist. Born into slavery, Tubman escaped to the North in 1849. In the next 10 years she made 19 trips into the South, leading 300 slaves to freedom. Soon she was known as ‘Moses.’ During the Civil War she served as a spy, scout, and nurse. Later she worked for the cause of women’s suffrage. She was a member of the AME Zion Church.

March 14: Fannie Lou Hamer (1917-1977)—Prophet of freedom. Raised in a family of sharecroppers in rural Mississippi, Hamer rose

up as a prophet to challenge the oppression of segregation and poverty. At the age of 45 she attended a civil rights rally and committed herself to the freedom movement. On several occasions she was arrested and beaten, but despite the dogs, fire hoses, clubs, and bombs she drew on her deep faith and vision of justice to challenge the powers of oppression. She died of breast cancer.

March 15: St. Longinus – Longinus is the name tradition gives to the unnamed Roman soldier who pierced Jesus' sided with a spear during the Crucifixion. Tradition also holds that he became a follower of the way of Jesus.

March 17: St. Patrick (389-461)—Bishop and missionary of Ireland. He was born into a Christian family in late Roman Britain. At 16 he was captured by Irish raiders and taken into slavery, where his only consolation was his Christian faith. Years later he escaped and returned to England, where he eventually became a Bishop. He felt called back to Ireland where he was able to spread the Christian faith.

March 19: St. Joseph—Little is known about Joseph, apart from the Nativity stories in Matthew and Luke. He is pictured as a person of deep faith, open to mystical experiences, who had great compassion. As a carpenter he is known as the patron saint of working folk. His family home was said to be in Nazareth.

March 21: Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)—Writer of Sacred Music. He was a devout Lutheran and had a deep devotion to the Bible. In each manuscript he began by writing the initials “J.J.” (*Jesu Juva*, “Help me, Jesus”) or “I.N.J.” (*In Nomine Jesu*, “In the name of Jesus”), and ended with “S.D.G.” (*Solo Deo Gloria*, “To God alone the glory.”). His chorales have been compared to the stained glass windows of a cathedral.

March 24: Archangel Gabriel – a messenger in sacred literature. Gabriel appears to Daniel in the Hebrew scriptures and to both Mary and Zechariah in the New Testament. Gabriel is also mentioned in the Book of Enoch as well as in the traditions of Islam and the Baha’i Faith.

Mar 24: St. (Archbishop) Oscar Romero (1917-1980)—Martyr of El Salvador. As the violence of the death squads escalated Romero experienced a personal transformation as the voice of the poor and a fearless champion of

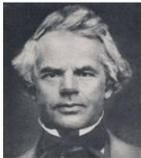
justice. He was unafraid to confront the political, military, and even religious forces of oppression. The masses of poor found in him a shepherd who loved them. He was assassinated at the altar while saying Mass in a hospital.

March 26: Bishop Richard Allen (1760-1831)—Founder of African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Born a slave, Allen was sold to a Methodist farmer and was converted. After purchasing his freedom he felt called to preach. He felt the needs of African-Americans were best suited by the message of hope he heard in the Wesleyan movement. After many years of struggle against white control of Black churches, in 1816 he organized the first major black denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

March 27: Meister Eckhart (1260-1329)—Dominican theologian and mystic. Eckhart’s writings were largely condemned in his lifetime, however he is today seen as a prophet of modern spirituality. He wrote in mystical and paradoxical terms of the union of the soul with God, of a God-consciousness that is attained only by emptying and detachment. His thoughts show many similarities to Zen Buddhism. He liked to say “Do not cling to the symbols, but get to the inner truth!”



Alethea B.
Small



P.P. Quimby



Absalom
Jones



Mikao Usui



Nona
Brooks



Florence
Li Tim Oi



Paramahansa
Yogananda



Annie Rix
Militz

Daily Reflection & Prayer

January 1 – **I can do it**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Convince yourself that you have the ability to do a certain thing, and you will have the ability.” *A.K. Mozumdar*

Let’s begin this new year with confidence. Let’s remind ourselves that the future has infinite possibilities. Let’s know that the past is behind us and does not determine what must happen next in our lives. Let’s believe that we are capable and able, wise and wonderful, and that we deserve success in our lives. We can be happy. We can forgive ourselves for past mistakes, and we can forgive others. We can overcome some of our fears. We can live abundantly and joyfully. We have the ability. Now, let’s get to it.

Throughout 2020, may I be confident of my ability to live well. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

“...WE ARE NEVER ALONE...WE ARE ALWAYS ONE WITH GOD...”

MARTHA SMOCK

January 2 – **Onward**

Rev. Anne R. Atwell

“My mission is life is not merely to survive, but to thrive, and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.”
Maya Angelou

So the rush of the holidays is over. Christmastide continues but the intensity of everything slows. Life becomes more relaxed, more subdued. I appreciate this quiet period of Christmastide where I can reflect on the meaning of what has occurred. And I consider what I can look forward to in the coming year. Peace can be difficult to come by during the busiest of the holiday season so relish the calm that is available to you now. Allow yourself to be open to the presence of the Spirit that is guiding you onward with compassion and even with some style.

Here I am, Holy One, ready to be your hands in this world. I look forward to being your presence in the coming year. Amen.

January 3 – **Holy silence**

Rev. Anne Atwell

“Listening creates a holy silence. When you listen generously to people, they can hear truth in themselves, often for the first time. And in the silence of listening, you can know yourself in everyone. Eventually you may be able to hear, in everyone and beyond everyone, the Unseen singing softly to itself and you.” *Rachel Naomi Remen*

In our silence, the presence of God can invite us to those spaces we may be reluctant to go; those places outside of our comfort zone. And when we offer sacred silence to those who need someone just to listen, we are affirming their value as part of the Divine Spirit. Be still. Be quiet. Be present to the one who guides us to our best selves.

*Today, for a moment, I will still my busy mind and
be present to the still small voice of the Divine One.*

JUST A THOUGHT

“TO HAVE CONFIDENCE YOU MUST HAVE A GOD BIG ENOUGH...TO DEPEND ON.”

MAX BALLARD

January 4 – **Living lovingly**

Rev. Kevin Tisdol

"Our lives are of great worth if we accept with good grace the situation Providence places us in, and go on living lovingly." *Takashi Nagai*

Life can deal us painful blows; how we react to those moments imprints our future. Physician Takashi Nagai saw what an atomic blast did to someone he loved. He could have withdrawn into himself but instead he used the rest of his life helping other survivors of that devastating event. When he was unable to be a physical presence for his people, he devoted his life to a spirit of prayer. What set Nagai apart from many of us was his ability to see the good in every situation. He knew that we would face troubles and he showed we can influence the results of those troubles by expressing love and pressing forward. Doing this proves that today is not the end and tomorrow has infinite possibilities.

Dear God, help me to learn how to always live lovingly. Amen.

January 5 – **A good way to live**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Just for today, I will let go of anger. Just for today, I will let go of worry. Today, I will count my many blessings. Today, I will do my work honestly. Today, I will be kind to every living creature.”

Mikao Usui (Discoverer of Reiki)

Reiki (Universal Life-force Energy) is used by practitioners to promote mental and physical well-being. Reiki practitioners allow themselves to be conduits of Universal Energy, and while they give healing treatments, they also detach from the outcomes. They aren't making anything happen; they are simply sharing benevolent energy, trusting it to go where it is needed and to do what is best. Reiki practitioners also affirm that they will release anger and anxiety, appreciate blessings, and deal honestly and compassionately with others. Worry less. Love more. Pray for the well-being of others. It's a good way to live; in fact, it sounds a lot like the Jesus way to live!

*Today, I will be hopeful, honest, and loving.
I will be a healing presence in the world. Amen.*

January 6 – **Creating change**

Rev. Ty Bradley

“Ours is very far from being a fair and just world. What other solution is there but to protest against injustice and to work to change the conditions that lead to great suffering? To help those who have suffered to heal so that they too can begin to experience joy in their own lives and gain the courage to work to change the world for others in their communities?”

Carol P. Christ

No matter how insurmountable the suffering we see around us, we are never without the creative freedom to respond to that suffering. Our efforts may be small, and they may not change the world on their own. But those efforts will make a difference for some, perhaps many. And that can spark a chain reaction whereby hope, empowerment, and joy spread like contagions far beyond the horizon of what we once imagined possible.

*In the face of oppression and suffering, may we be ever faithful
to accept God's invitation to be co-creators of justice and joy. Amen.*

January 7 – **Divine embrace**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

"God is all, equally present everywhere. Creation is God in Self-manifestation. [We are] included within God..." *Max Ballard*

I remember thinking that religion's job was to make me "right" with God. I used faith as "fire-insurance" to save me from afterlife torment. I was taught that there conditions that must be met to be accepted by God. If I failed to meet them, God might reject me. That was not a model of love worthy of a deity, and it was not a healthy belief system for me. It offered no joy, no real freedom. But to know God as omnipresence, as the power of love, as Life living Itself through me, as an embrace that will never let me go...that understanding of God has brought a lot of healing in my life, and I offer this healing experience of divinity to as many people as I can.

I love you, God, because you are love. I rejoice, dear God, because I am one with you, held forever in your embrace. Alleluia! Amen.

January 8 - **Be light**

Rev. Margarita Rodriguez

"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it." *Edith Wharton*

Light is energy that helps us see things and keeps us from darkness. It is often used as a metaphor to describe the essence of spirit - God. To radiate our light we need to connect with what brings us joy, peace and love. As we start this new decade let us pause and reflect on how we can be agents of light. When we make a choice to be kind, to stand up for justice, to pray for others we become the candle. When we chose to support entities that practice kindness, when we chose to celebrate the goodness we see in the world we become the mirror reflecting the light. This year we can be intentional in being light in all our interactions.

Today I am aware of the call to action to spread light by being joyful, loving and giving peace to others.

January 9 – **A good day**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“I make this day a good day in my world, a holy day, by remembering that God’s presence fills every moment.” *Nona Brooks*

How do you pray? Do you kneel, bow, stand, sit, or walk when you pray? Do you use prayer beads? Do you read from a prayer book, recite scripture, sing choruses, or light candles? Do you use affirmations, or do you sit in the Silence simply communing with the Sacred Presence? These are all beautiful ways to pray. Actually, whenever we are aware of the divine Presence, we are in prayer. Whenever we sense the nearness of divine Love, we are having communion. To think of God, to rest in God, to speak to God, to listen for God, to reflect on the goodness of God...all of this is prayer. Let’s sanctify this day with prayer, with an awareness of God’s sweet presence.

*God fills every moment of this day, and so it is
that this is a very good day. Amen.*



January 10 – **Mahayana Buddhists New Year**

Rev. Lynda Pantoja

“May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness; may all be free from sorrow and the causes of sorrow; may all never be separated from the sacred happiness which is sorrowless; and may all live in equanimity, without too much attachment and too much aversion, and live believing in the equality of all that lives.” *A Buddhist Prayer*

Happy New Year today to our Mahayana Buddhists brothers and sisters as they celebrate a fresh start and a new year with the first full moon day in January! Cleaning their homes, wearing new clothes and wishing friends and family a blessed new year is traditional. Buddha statues are bathed in ceremonial rituals, and in the temple, candles are lit; at night, fireworks illumine the skies. The Mahayana Buddhism devotees work toward enlightenment for all sentient beings—not just themselves. It encompasses Zen, Tibetan and Shingon Buddhism, and is practiced in Japan, China, Vietnam, Korea, Nepal and Tibet.

I gratefully accept today as another joyful opportunity to start anew!

January 11 – **Father, Mother god**

Rev. Marian Cavagnaro

“Parental love is the only love that is truly selfless, unconditional and forgiving.” *Dr. T.P. Chia*

Today, I celebrate my mother and father’s wedding anniversary. Although they are celebrating in heaven, I feel their presence. My sisters and I were blessed with amazing parents that truly loved each other and all of us. They were also encouraging, selfless, forgiving, humble, and faithful. Growing up, my name for God was Father. My spiritual journey over the years has opened up my naming of God. For me God is so much bigger: *God of many names, mystery beyond our naming. Holy One, Divine Presence, Loving Creator* are divine designations that speak to my heart and soul. I love the Aramaic names for mother and father, Immah and Abba (for me, mom and dad). My parents’ relationship and their lives of service to their family, friends and strangers was a profound witness to me of God’s presence.

*Heavenly Parent, today I give thanks for your love
that is selfless, unconditional and forgiving.*

January 12 – **Positive prayer**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“I leave all my decisions with thee, O [God]. I am willing to do what thy wisdom leads me to do. I rejoice in thy guidance. I trust in thee. I live in a universe that is alive at every point, cooperative at every point...I am richly endowed. The...Spirit [is given to me] without measure. The [Divine] gives me wisdom and life without measure. I am filled with [divine] wisdom, energy, power. [God] gives me [divine] love without measure. [God] gives me [divine] substance without measure. I abound in all good.” *Nona Brooks*

Nona Brooks’ prayers were always positive, comforting, and beautiful. In the prayer above she acknowledges God’s presence, goodness, and willingness to lend aid. She then affirms that God is freely and continuously sharing wisdom, love, spiritual power, and abundance. Acknowledging God and affirming God’s goodness is an effective way to pray.

*Dear God, I give thanks for your goodness which is now
and always filling my life with hope and joy. Amen.*

January 13 – **Liberating images of God**

Deacon Sue Gallagher, Ed.D.

“God’s countenance will resemble the likeness of those most oppressed in our society...What would it be like to contemplate the face of God as poor, black and female?” *Laurie M. Cassidy*

What is the image of the God you pray to you? Often the image we use reflects the familiar and the comfortable. What may open up in your heart and your spirit if you prayed with an image of God that resembles those marginalized or disregarded by society? God loves all of creation and invites us into communion with “the least of these” so we can see and know God’s love more completely. Meditating and praying with an image of God as a refugee, a person displaced by gentrification or natural disaster, the elderly, or the infirm will reframe your experience and knowing of the power and love of God.

*May our image of God liberate and free us
to see and respond joyously to God in all!*

January 14 – **The absurdity of hell**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“That thing of hell and eternal punishment is the most absurd, as well as the most disagreeable thought that ever entered into the head of mortals.” *George Berkeley*

The “hell” that has evolved in Christian myth is abusive. Manipulating people into compliance with the threat of endless torment is cruel and unethical. We all have hellish experiences, of course, but if God is omnipresent then there cannot be a “place” outside of God, and nothing in God can be “hell.” The Christian myth of hell has been influenced by ancient Persian and Greek myths but what is important to me is that we learn to trust God as omnipresent Love. Love doesn’t condemn, doesn’t inflict pain, doesn’t give up on those who are loved, and certainly doesn’t dream up places of torture. God is love, and when we are loving we are divine love in action.

I give thanks for, and completely trust, divine Love. And so it is.

January 15 – **Owning our story**

Deacon Ed Huckemeyer, D.D.

“Here’s what is truly at the heart of wholeheartedness: Worthy now. Not if. Not When. We are worthy of love and belonging now. Right this minute. As is.” *Brene Brown*

For many years, I believed that I needed to conform to the expectations of others in order to fit in, gain approval and feel a sense of belonging. It took a long time for me to realize that fitting in and belonging were not interchangeable terms. Belonging did not require me to change who I was but to be who I was. This understanding enabled me to embrace my individuality and affirm that who I am, just as I am, is a blessing. This is true of each and all of us. We are unique, precious and gifted in ways that make our story authentic for us. We never should allow others to write the narrative. It is ours alone to create, live and cherish.

Thank you, God, for all that I am.

JUST A THOUGHT

“THE HEALING TOUCH OF...GOD IS NOW UPON YOU, CALMING EVERY FEAR...”

MARY KUPFERLE

January 16 – **God’s ways**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“God’s ways are pleasant and all God’s paths are peace.” *P.P. Quimby*

God is love. So, when I am afraid, I know the fear isn’t of God, because God is love. When I think I am experiencing hate (which is just another form of fear), that isn’t of God, because God is love. When there is pain, God hasn’t caused it but is with me nurturing me through the difficulty, because God is love. When I remember that God’s ways are pleasant and God’s paths are peace, then I “go to peace instead of to pieces.” I become more peaceful, more confident, more joyful. When we need to feel a bit more peaceful, hopeful, or happy, let’s remember and declare: *God is love*. That will surely return us to pleasant ways and peaceful paths.

*I give thanks, God, that your ways are
pleasant and your paths are peace. Amen.*

January 17 – **Heaven or hell**

Rev. Dr. Nancy Davis

“We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are.” Anais Nin

How do you see things, people, situations? Most of us would rather not accept that, “What I look upon is my state of mind reflected outward.” (ACIM W-pll.304.1:3) *A Course in Miracles* teaches us about the power of our perception when it states, “Perception can make whatever picture the mind desires to see. Remember this. In this lies either Heaven or hell, as you elect.” (M-19.5:2-4) Throughout my career I have worked with the poorest and the richest people in this country. I have witnessed hell through their eyes. Those who were willing to exchange their wounds and projections for the power and peace of true forgiveness, experienced a healing shift in how they saw others, as well as themselves. The *Course* teaches, “Forgiveness stands between illusion and the truth; between the world you see and that which lies beyond; between the hell of guilt and Heaven’s gate.” (W-pl.134.10:4)

May I choose forgiveness as my path to Heaven today.

January 18 – **Surrender**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“[Lord], I abandon myself into your hands. Do with me what you will...Into your hands I commend my spirit; I give it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so...surrender myself into your hands with a trust beyond measure...” Charles de Foucauld

Charles de Foucauld was a French nobleman who became a priest and hermit. His beautiful prayer of surrender stirs faith within me. It reminds me to trust that there is a Power that holds me, that will never and can never abandon me, and that is working with and through me for what is good. “I surrender myself into your hands” is an act of faith which can lessen anxiety and reassure us that we are never alone and that, ultimately, all will be well. Perhaps today is a good day to say to God as we understand God, “I place myself into your care and keeping. Let your good and gracious will be done.”

Thy will be done. Amen.

January 19 – **The sweet presence**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Your prayer is a conscious knowing of the Presence of the Divine Goodness.” *H. B. Jeffery*

Sometimes our prayers seem like a call into a void: “Hello? Is anyone out there? If you can hear me, I have a few requests...” But the prayer that brings comfort, that helps us hold our heads up, that gives us peace and hope and courage and resilience is the prayer of communion, *comm-union*, union with God. Jesus said seek first the realm of God, that is, seek first an experience of God, an awareness of God’s nearness, and then other good things will happen. Prayer then is less about a wish list, and more about resting in the sweet presence of God.

I am now and forever in the divine Presence. I rest in God’s tender embrace. I bask in God’s glorious Light. Joy, hope, and peace are now filling my life. Praise to you living, loving God. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

“TRUE PRAYER IS COMMUNION WITH GOD.”

HELEN ZAGAT

January 20 – **Still waiting for promised land**

Rev. Kurt Krieger

"I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know...that we, as a people, will get to the promised land." *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

These words of Dr. King’s were delivered on the eve of his assassination in Memphis in 1968. Now here we are, 50+ years later, wondering how far away is that promised land; that land where children aren't judged by the color of the skin but by the content of their character?

It's easy to get discouraged when we don't believe we can change the course of the future; but Dr. King once encouraged: “You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.”

We might not see the new heaven and new earth in our lifetimes, but we cannot afford to not take the first step.

In this new year we are looking into the unknown new land of what could be. Let each of us take the next step into the unknown. Amen.

January 21 – **Practicing the presence**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“...think often of God, by day, by night, in your business, and even in your diversions. God is always near you and with you; leave God not alone. You would think it rude to leave a friend alone who came to visit you: why then must God be neglected? Do not then forget God, but think of God often, adore God continually...this is the glorious employment of a Christian; if we do not know it we must learn it.” *Brother Lawrence*

Brother Lawrence was a 17th century Carmelite monk who had a passion for being in constant communion with the Divine. And the spiritual life is a life of becoming more and more aware of the Sacred in everyday life. As we discover and experience God, we will study more, worship more, share more. Once we live in daily, even hourly communion with God, life itself becomes an act of worship and most things then are done in, with, and for God.

I will think of God throughout the day. Amen.

January 22 – **Gratefulness**

Deacon Michael Karban

“When you practice gratefulness, there is a sense of respect toward others.” *HH The Dalai Lama*

As we go about our daily lives, it can be difficult to express gratitude. Sometimes we get busy with life or encounter challenges that overwhelm us. Practicing gratefulness honors our connection with our Divine Source and each other. It can lead to healing and a sense of peace.

Practicing gratitude doesn't have to be grandiose. It can be as simple as a smile or hello for a stranger, listening to a friend, opening a door for someone, offering a word of encouragement to someone who is hurting or struggling, or sharing a meal with someone special. These gestures demonstrate our respect for others as well as recognize and honor their sacred value. One never knows how a simple gesture can make a difference in someone else's life. Practicing gratefulness is also an act of love.

Divine Source, today I choose to practice gratefulness and share love. As I share with and honor others, I'm blessed.

January 23 – Miracles

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“...affirm the miracle that you are...Say to yourself, ‘I am a living, breathing miracle! How...joyous is the song of life in me...’” *Martha Smock*

At Sunshine Cathedral one of our slogans is, “You are God’s miracle and not God’s mistake!” And it’s true. We are each part of a thriving, evolving, intelligent universe. We each are capable of love, compassion, kindness, and generosity. We are each resilient and we each are part of an amazing Whole. We share a Life-force, a Power, a Presence that is ubiquitous and everlasting. We have minds and emotions and talents and complex relationships. We are wonderful! We too often focus on our mistakes, or on what went wrong, or on some overpowering challenge, but what is also true is that we are living miracles! There is a joyous song of life in us. We are God’s miracle and not God’s mistake.

*I am a living, breathing miracle! How joyous is the song of life in me.
Thank you, God. Amen.*

January 24 – God is Love

Rev Renwick Bell

“If it’s not about love, then it’s not about God...” *The Most Reverend Michael Curry*

Jesus said, “Come unto me all of you” (Matthew 11:28). The inclusive message of God’s love pervades the Gospels, yet somehow in many Christian churches this message seems to get lost in translation. Why is it that Sunday is the most segregated day in the Christian Church? A Christian church that excludes and marginalizes does not exercise love, and therefore, “it’s not about God”. Bishop John Shelby Spong is the author of *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*. In place of theism’s emphasis on an external, personal, supernatural, and invasive God, Bishop Spong suggests recognizing the reality of God through images such as the *Ground of All Being* and the *Source of Love*. Instead of Jesus the rescuer, he prefers Christ the spirit person.

*Help us, O God, to continue to spread your love
throughout your church and beyond. Amen.*

January 25 – **Daily joy**

Rev. Anne R. Atwell

“Strolling down sidewalks, I’ll occasionally muse over the kinds of flora sprouting from the cracks. I love how clovers and mosses manage to thrive from even the thinnest slivers of earth — beauty blooming amidst adversity. Seeking out this daily joy is a matter of insisting on connection in spite of systems and circumstances that push us away from it.” *Kristin Lin*

How do you find your daily joy? Or are there circumstances that seem to steal joy, making it difficult to remain positive? That seems to be part of the human condition and, at the same time, there are those people who seem to be filled with joy even during the most trying of times. It is important to acknowledge the difficulties and it is important not to remain bogged down by the systems that will push us away from our joy. Do something today that brings you joy!

Dear God, I sense your presence in the difficulties and in the joy. Thank you!

January 26 – **We are good**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Daily make this recognition: God is the whole of Being, now and forever. [We are] included within the whole Being...Since God is Good, I am Good.” *Fannie B. James*

Divine Science teacher and pioneer Fannie Brooks James reminds us that God is the whole of Being (or “the ground of being” as Paul Tillich put it, or that in which we have our being, as a Greek poet quoted by St. Paul said). Since God is the Source and Substance of all that is, we must share in the reality of divine Life. We are made of God stuff. God is omnipresent, and therefore, being everywhere fully present, must be the only Presence. We must be in and of God! So, we are innately good. If we don’t realize that we won’t demonstrate our goodness consistently, but nevertheless, God is the whole of Being and God is good. Since God is Good, you and I are also good.

Since God is Good, I am Good. And so it is.

January 27 – **Here and now**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“You are exactly the same after death as you were before... Whatever you have made of yourself thus far, so will you be hereafter...To change, you have to make the effort. This world is the place to do it.”

Paramahansa Yogananda

My spirituality isn't very “other worldly.” I act as if my departed loved ones are still with me, or available to me, perhaps in a sort of paradise, but I don't really know what the next life-experience is for any of us. I trust that life is eternal (without beginning or end), and that joy is always possible, but beyond that, I just don't know. Religion, then, is a tool for this life. Whatever is beyond this life-experience, the best way to prepare for it is to make the most of this life. I am more interested in getting heaven here than I am in getting to heaven.

Let heaven be in my heart, here and now. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

**“HERE AND NOW, WE ARE SURROUNDED BY,
AND IMMERSSED IN, AN INFINITE GOOD.”**

ERNEST HOLMES

January 28 – **Freedom from failure**

by Florence T. Ritchie (from Winning Freedom)

Success in anything is the inevitable result of the right application of the Law. Success demands of us all we have in the way of persistence, patience, faith. One who gives up too easily is not ready for success...

The only real failure is the failure to try. Sometimes an apparent failure is only God's way of telling us that we are on the wrong path.

Many people become discouraged and give up just before the victory...

Some religious-minded people think that all they need do to accomplish anything is to ask God to do it for them. But dependence upon God does not relieve us of our own efforts. Whatever else God may be, God is not our nursemaid. God will not do for us what God can only do through us.

[The Psalmist wrote]: The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.

[Affirm now]: Today I rejoice in my freedom from belief in failure.

January 29 – **Intercessions**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

We pray for the elderly: May they have joy.

We pray for children: May they be safe and happy.

We pray for spiritual seekers: May they find hope and healing, peace and purpose.

We pray for those who have health challenges: May divine Life express through them.

We pray for our earth home: May we cherish it and work to be good stewards of it.

We pray of the poor: May we work to create a fair and just society that values all people.

We pray for those who have suffered violence: May we find the courage to end the culture of violence.

We pray for refugees driven from their homes by war, cruelty, or poverty: May the nations they turn to offer welcome and shelter.

We pray for peace in the world: “May peace prevail on earth.”

*We now release these prayers to the perfection of divine right action.
Amen.*

January 30 – **Let go and let God**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Often in the past, Lord, I have come to thee with heavy heart and burdened life. And thou hast answered my prayers and graciously lifted the burden from me. Yet with a strange perversion, I still refuse to leave my burdens with thee. Always I gather them up – those heavy bundles of fears and anxieties – and shoulder them again.” Peter Marshall

Peter Marshall was a Presbyterian minister and chaplain for the U.S. Senate. His prayer above resonates with me. How many times have I asked God to show me a solution, but then continued to worry. How many times have I called upon God for wisdom, strength, or insight but then continued to hold on to my anxieties. Prayer is a way of releasing some of our concerns. Once we let them go, we might be better served by not, then, reclaiming them.

*Today, I will try to let go and let God. Take my burdens, God;
and this time, perhaps I'll let you keep them. Amen.*

January 31 – **God is here!**

by Martha Dawson (DSFI At-One-Ment: Daily Studies in Divine Science)

We are all members of God's family. Each is divinely related to all others and God is our ever-present [Parent]. There is no closer tie, one to another, than that between members of a caring family tenderly enfolded under the wing of a loving [Parent].

There are no step-children in God's family, for each belongs with full recognition. Every now and again we have sudden flashes of knowing who we are. No one need tell us at such a time that we are an innate part of [a divine] household, that we belong in this splendor and beauty. God's constant presence insures our good. God has already provided everything for us. All the joys of heaven and earth are within our grasp, but we must reach out to secure this abundance...

We look up with determination to claim our own, closing our eyes to illusion. As we knowingly become one with our God, [we are assured] of God's presence.

Rejoice, for God is here!

"Behold, here I am." Genesis 22.1

February 1 – **A spacious love**

Rev. Anne Atwell

*"Love is space. It is developing our own capacity for spaciousness within ourselves to allow others to be as they are. And that doesn't mean that we don't have hopes or wishes that things are changed or shifted, but that to come from a place of love is to be in acceptance of what is, even in the face of moving it towards something that is more whole, more just, more spacious for all of us." *angel Kyodo williams**

We want people to accept us as we are, so we need to offer them the same consideration. This does not mean that we should accept people's ill-will towards us. However we must remember that each person is unique, with differing thoughts, ideas, and ways of being. And, yes, we are all made in the image of the Divine. When we affirm this, our love for ourselves and the world will become more expansive and inclusive.

Dear God, thank you for your love. Amen.

February 2 – **God is with us**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“In work and worship, God is with us. Gathered and scattered, God is with us. Now and always, God is with us. Amen.” *Iona Community*

Divine omnipresence means we are never alone. We are always in the presence of Love. Sometimes, the only prayer we need is the reminder that “God is with us.” Throughout the day today, affirm: God is with us.

I give thanks because God is with us. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

**“GOD OF THE PAST, WHO HAS FATHERED AND MOTHERED US,
WE ARE HERE TO THANK YOU.**

GOD OF THE FUTURE, WHO IS ALWAYS AHEAD OF US, WE ARE HERE TO TRUST YOU.

GOD OF THE PRESENT, HERE IN THE MIDST OF US, WE ARE HERE TO PRAISE YOU.

GOD OF LIFE BEYOND US, WITHIN US, WE REJOICE IN YOUR GLORIOUS LOVE.”

IONA COMMUNITY

February 3 – **Radically inclusive love**

Rev. Ty Bradley

“Radically inclusive love entails entering into one another’s worlds and experiencing new freedoms from whatever grinds us down, whatever oppresses a suffering humanity and a groaning creation.” *Mark Taylor*

As communities of faith get better about embracing human diversity, certain buzz words tend to become part of their language and culture; “Tolerance,” “Acceptance,” and “Welcoming” are most common. Rev. Dr. Mark Taylor distinguishes these approaches to greater openness in our churches from what he calls, “radically inclusive love.” This involves much more than tolerating, accepting, or even welcoming “difference” in our communities. Rather, radically inclusive love means rejecting the hierarchical assumption that “we” can tolerate, accept, or welcome “them,” instead favoring a mutual engagement where we experience each other’s worlds, giving and receiving from one another equally. In so doing, Taylor asserts, we experience liberative transformation for ourselves, our communities, and ultimately for the world.

Source and Substance of all creation, may we experience greater freedom as we learn to love our way into each other’s worlds.

February 4 – **I believe**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“I believe with all my heart in one Power, and that one, good. By this Power I am made strong every moment, for it was and is my Maker. By inheritance, the power of the Limitless is mine. My spirit is strong. I am joined to the one Spirit omnipotent.” *Fannie B. James*

I believe. Belief is really just a well rehearsed opinion. But when we are talking about “believing in one power, and that one, good” we are not just expressing an opinion. This “believe with all my heart” is something felt, experienced, known...something we trust utterly. We have experienced the Divine as a loving Presence, an infinite Compassion, an all-inclusive Presence, pure Goodness. When our God is both good and present, we are serene, hopeful, and empowered.

My spirit is strong for I am joined to the one Spirit omnipotent.

JUST A THOUGHT

**“MAY PEACE PERMEATE ALL THE WORLD AND
ALL BEINGS ENJOY PEACE AND HAPPINESS.”**

LITURGY OF NICHIREN SHU

February 5 – **Jesus sees my heart**

Rev. Kevin Tisdol

“Jesus Christ, Lord of all things! You see my heart, you know my desires. Possess all that I am — you alone. I am your sheep; make me worthy to overcome the devil.” *St. Agatha*

We pray in many ways – silently alone, out loud in community, and by our helpful actions. What we pray for is as varied as the ways we pray. St. Agatha prayed that she would survive her difficulties and found a way to hold onto her faith. For me, that’s the power of prayer – holding on to my faith. I know that I am not praying for the Universe to solve my problems because what the Universe does for me, the Universe does through me, I am praying for the faith to believe that I can overcome the “devil” of a time I’m going through. And then I work to overcome and move forward to a better day.

The Universe is filled with infinite possibilities and through my faith, I aim to find them. Amen.

February 6 – **Seeking the sense of divine presence**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Source of all good! Day by day are thy blessings renewed to us; and again we come with thankful hearts to seek the sense of thy presence.” *Common Prayer (King’s Chapel)*

“We come...to seek the sense of thy presence.” God is present. We aren’t seeking God (who is right where we are), but we are seeking an experience of God, the “sense” of the divine Presence. The prayer above shows us how to do that. There is an acknowledgment of God (Source of all good) and affirmation of blessings (day by day are...blessings renewed) and there is gratitude (thankful hearts). God is, God blesses, and we are thankful. Now what we want is to be aware of our unity with God. If we don’t sense it, we can pray for it, and we can be sure that such a prayer will be answered.

*Dear God, you offer blessings in abundance, and I am thankful.
My only request in this moment is to sense your
sweet presence more fully. Amen.*

February 7 – **Divine Presence**

Rev. Margarita Rodriguez

"Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return It is the Shekinah of the soul, the Presence in the midst And [It] is within us all." *Thomas R. Kelly*

We all encounter different challenges as we go through our daily routine. When we decide to face those challenges alone we may encounter frustration, a sense of loneliness and sometimes defeat. Thomas R. Kelly reminds us that there is a holy place within us, this place is the dwelling of the Divine; a place where we can hear the still small voice reminding us that we are never alone. By taking a practice of silence we can access this sacred space where we can be guided, inspired and unconditionally loved.

*Today, I take time to connect to the Presence within me
and ask for guidance as I move through my daily routine.*

February 8 – Nirvana day

Rev. Lynda Pantoja

“Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.” *The Buddha*



Today, many Buddhists across the world commemorate Buddha’s leaving of this world into a new existence as he achieved “Nirvana”, the state of perfect happiness which is the goal of all Buddhists. Nirvana is believed to be the end of the cycle of death and rebirth. Buddhism teaches that it is reached when all want and suffering is gone. Some Buddhists celebrate Nirvana Day on the 15th; they all do so by meditating or by going to Buddhist temples or monasteries where food is prepared, and some people bring presents such as money, household goods or clothes. Buddhists review their lives and how they can gain the perfect peace of Nirvana. They remember friends or relations who have recently died and reflect on the fact that death is a part of life for everyone.

Today I remember my happiness and I am freed!

February 9 – Ego

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The ego seeks to divide and separate. Spirit seeks to unify and heal.”

A Course in Miracles

The ego is the “I”, but in spiritual discourse, it isn’t the REAL I (the I Am, the fully Realized divine Self), but is instead the small sense of “I”, the feeling of being separate and less than. The ego thrives on fear and cannot see unity, wholeness, or interconnectedness. The ego is a wounded self, a false and damaged sense of self. The ego, then, seeks to divide and separate. But Spirit (which is Whole, Perfect, Eternal, Omnipresent, All Love, All Power, All Wisdom, the Source of All Good Gifts), seeks to unify and heal. When religion causes fear or bigotry or hatred, it has been misunderstood and misapplied; it has been used in service of the ego. We know we’re getting it right when what we experience is love, peace, joy, justice, hope, and goodwill.

*Let there be healing wherever it is needed today,
in my life and in the lives of others. Amen.*

February 10 – Finding deep purpose

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Jesus (Matthew 6.21)

Viktor Frankl, an Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist, and Holocaust Survivor, wrote the bestselling book, "Man's Search for Meaning." His message is clear. If you can find your "Why" you can find your "How." It was this thinking that moved him beyond his own suffering and he survived unthinkable horror. Your why is your deep purpose and your how is one step at a time.

Today my purpose is clear and I have faith my how appears. And so it is.

JUST A THOUGHT

"SOULS LOVE. THAT'S WHAT SOULS DO. EGOS DON'T, BUT SOULS DO. BECOME A SOUL, LOOK AROUND, AND YOU'LL BE AMAZED--ALL THE BEINGS AROUND YOU ARE SOULS. BE ONE, SEE ONE. WHEN MANY PEOPLE HAVE THIS HEART CONNECTION, THEN WE WILL KNOW THAT WE ARE ALL ONE, WE HUMAN BEINGS ALL OVER THE PLANET. WE WILL BE ONE. ONE LOVE. AND DON'T LEAVE OUT THE ANIMALS, AND TREES, AND CLOUDS, AND GALAXIES--IT'S ALL ONE. IT'S ONE ENERGY."

RAM DASS

February 11 – Choosing focus

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

"...we may be hardwired to focus on problems...We dwell on bad experiences long after the fact, and spend vast amounts of energy anticipating what might go wrong in the future...Studies...show that we must consciously hold on to a positive thought or feeling for a minimum of 15 seconds before it leaves any imprint in the neurons." *Richard Rohr*

We have been so conditioned to be afraid, resentful, and suspicious that those negative attitudes may run deeper than we realize. But we can begin to make some changes. We can choose encouraging, hopeful, appreciative, loving thoughts, and we if will hold those thoughts and feelings for 15 seconds, or 30, or a minute...then those gifts will begin to take hold in our minds. Reprogramming our thoughts and attitudes is possible and worth the effort. We can be happier, or at least less fearful. As St. Paul said, "Whatever is...lovely...think of such things" (for at least 15 seconds!).

Today, with God's help, I will focus on what is good. Amen.

February 12 —Persevering in the holy presence

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“I drove away from my mind everything capable of spoiling the sense of the presence of God.... I just make it my business to persevere in God’s holy presence... My soul has had an habitual, silent, secret conversation with God.” *Brother Lawrence*

To think of God constantly is to pray without ceasing. Prayer can be praising God, asking God for guidance or insights, affirming God’s goodness, expressing hope or gratitude, calling to mind others whom we wish to bless, meditating on scripture passages, imagining a great light surrounding us, or even just sitting in Silence relishing the rich experience of stillness in the divine Presence. By being mindful, almost every moment can be prayerful. By keeping God in our thoughts, we are *persevering in the holy presence*. Today, let us practice the presence of God.

*My heart is set on God today. Every moment is God-filled.
Alleluia! Amen.*

February 13 – **All things are possible**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“I never allow the word ‘impossible’ to take root in my mind, nor should you.” *Paramahansa Yogananda*

I’ve talked myself out of some pretty great opportunities over the years. Luckily, I have also taken some worthwhile chances, and achieved many of my goals. What I’ve learned (and relearned, and remembered) is that what I often call impossible may just be difficult, or costly, or slow...but not really impossible. We can do pretty incredible things when we allow ourselves to believe that “the future has infinite possibilities.” When I start believing that things are impossible, it may be time enter into the rejuvenating Silence of meditation where I will be reminded that I am one with an abundant universe wherein all things are possible.

*I will not allow the word “impossible” to take root in my mind.
I know that all things are possible.*

February 14 – **Pike’s gospel**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“It is disgraceful that people are being barred from neighborhoods and clubs on a basis that would have barred Jesus himself.” *James A. Pike*

Bishop Pike was an early proponent of the ordination of women, racial desegregation, and the acceptance of LGBT people in the Church. Pike invited Martin Luther King Jr. to speak at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco in 1965 following his march to Selma. Bishop Pike brought Progressive Christianity, contemporary scholarship, and contextualized theology to page and pulpit helping to educate and liberate lay members of the church. He spoke out against injustice, knowing that the gospel is meant to be good news for the marginalized and oppressed. His version of Christianity remains a sharp contrast to the harshness of fundamentalism even to this day.

We bless the memory of Bishop Pike and we are blessed by his life and witness. May we boldly share good news in our day. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

“GOD IS PEACE; THIS PEACE ENFOLDS ME IN ITS ARMS NOW.”

JOSEPH MURPHY

February 15 – **Be the light**

Rev. Anne Atwell

“...I’m content to do my little bit...if each one would light a candle we’d have a tremendous light.” *Sister Thea Bowman*

Sister Bowman also shared “Sometimes people think they have to do big things in order to make change.” It is true that small acts of kindness make a significant impact in our world. What if we responded with forgiveness instead of anger? What if we provided assistance instead of judging others? What if we could set aside our own discomfort and look into the face of another person, seeing their Divinity? We each have times in our lives when our plans did not go as we had hoped. Often it is the encouragement of others that keeps us moving forward. My friends, take some time today to be the light for another person. It is the best way in which to make manifest God’s love in this world.

I will do my little bit to provide light for all. Amen!

February 16 – **It's okay to need healing**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Look for things to feel good about.” Abraham-Hicks

I believe optimism is better than pessimism. I believe in the power of counting my blessings. I believe in my sacred value and enormous potential; but every once in a while, a few weeks or months every decade or so, something unhealed pops up. Something will trigger self-doubt, depression, or anxiety. Sometimes there are tears, but more often, heavy sighs or overwhelming fatigue. Sometimes there is an “ache” that can't be physically located. Prayer helps. Support of loved ones is a godsend. Medication is a blessing from Heaven! And once it's all sorted through, I'm good for another decade. I do look for things to feel good about, and that is a powerful strategy; and still, sometimes I need a little extra help. Seeking help is part of trying to feel better. Healing comes in lots of ways, and needing healing is nothing to feel shame about. Indeed, healing the shame of needing healing is its own miracle.

God help me to look for things to feel good about, and help me find them. Heal me from any shame that I'm tempted to embrace during times when I need a little extra help. Amen.

February 17 – **Oneness**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“All things are in the Universe, and the universe is in all things: we in it, and it in us; in this way everything concurs in a perfect unity.” Giordano Bruno

I love the message of oneness. We are part of all that is. We are part of a great Whole and the Whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Our thoughts, feelings, actions, relationships, words...everything matters because we are all connected to one another, to the environment, and to our Spiritual Source. Even in our great diversity, we are united. We are one. If we could remember this, we'd love and share more, and we would not tolerate injustice and oppression.

Today, I remember that we are all ONE. And so it is.

February 18 – **It's okay to hope**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We cannot face the challenges of life without hope. Still, when hope doesn't yield the miracle we wanted, we often feel bad for having given hope a chance. I try my best to relieve people of any hope related regrets. Hope isn't a guarantee, it's an encouragement. Hope tells us that things can get better, or that something good might emerge from the heartache, or that at very least, we are strong and wise and resilient enough to face the obstacles at hand. And that encouragement can energize us and keep us going. If you are hoping for something good, I can't promise that your hope will be realized, but I do believe that hope is its own blessing and that it is never wasted. It's okay to hope!

I give thanks for infinite hope! Amen.

February 19 – **The power to choose**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Prove that you can keep your inner joy in the midst of sorrow, and hold your place in the midst of irritations and threatening depression, and you know that from thenceforth no [one] can take your joy or your peace from you. You have the fountain in your soul.” *Annie Rix Militz*

We spiritual types sometimes think that we should never be sad or uncertain, but that isn't realistic. We have a range of human emotions and we will experience and express them over time. However, our strength doesn't come from never having challenges or disappointments, but in realizing that we have the power to choose how we will respond to them. We can hold our place in the midst of irritations; we can keep inner joy even while experiencing sorrow. Yes, prayer can influence situations, but even more wondrously, prayer can help us have peace and joy regardless of situations.

With deep gratitude, I choose peace and joy today. Amen.

February 20 – **Part of something bigger than just ourselves**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“It is better to be part of a great whole than to be the whole of a small part.” *Frederick Douglass*

Frederick Douglass is a heroic figure in American history. His opposition to the slave trade as well as his own personal resilience and his efforts to embolden others all made him an integral part of a movement for justice. His work to end oppression and to challenge those who ignored (or benefited from) it was part of a calling for human freedom and equality that remains sacred to this day. We who work for peace, justice, inclusion, and healing are doing Gospel work. We are part of a greater vision, a larger movement, a universal call to let Heaven’s light shine more brightly on earth. We aren’t religious to secure our own power and privilege; rather, we are part of a great whole that is meant to include and affirm all people.

One with All Life, I affirm the sacred value of every person. Amen.

February 21 – **We decide**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“We can decide for ourselves what we shall see. For my part I intend to look for goodness and beauty in life. Cynics may twit me about my ‘rose-colored glasses,’ but I prefer them to the smoky glasses that make the pessimist’s world so dark.” *Florence T. Ritchie*

Is a rainy day gloomy or relaxing? I get to decide. Is a busy day frustrating, or is it fulfilling because of all that gets accomplished? I decide. Is failure final, or is it part of learning and can lead to future success? It’s often up to me to determine. Is the past a source of shame, or has my healing from it become a source of strength and inspiration? When we change how we look at something, what we see and what we think it means also will change. A simple change of attitude will often help make our experience of events better, whether or not the events change.

*I decide how I see things, and therefore, how I may experience them.
Amen.*

February 22 – **Mind power**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Mind is *magnetic* because it attracts to itself whatever bears relation to the thought it fixes itself upon...Allow yourself to fear, and you will fear more and more...Set your mind on health and courage and the like currents will be drawn to you.” *Prentice Mulford*

I never want to suggest that people deserve the difficulties that befall them, nor do I want to offer up spirituality as a guaranteed or easy fix, nor as a wish granting genie. However, attitude does make a difference. What we expect we often experience. What we look for we often find. “Where attention goes, energy flows.” New Thought philosophy offers neither blame nor magic, just a reminder that our minds are part of Divine Mind and are therefore powerful. We can influence many situations and we can choose how we respond to almost every situation.

I use Mind Power wisely and well. There is still a lot for me to achieve.

JUST A THOUGHT

“CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE...ONLY THAT WHICH THOU ART CAN BE MY PORTION.
I CLAIM MY DIVINE PORTION...I THANK THEE THAT I CAN SAY WITH ALL MY HEART,
‘THY WILL BE DONE.’”
CARRIE MUNZ

February 23 – **Demonstrating grace**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“...will there be another war? How about [those] who say that our civilization is about to end?, etc. Frankly, I have had no direct revelation on any of these points. I only know that our God...is greater and far more powerful than all the destructive forces of the universe, and that if only a few of us stand steadfastly for truth and righteousness they will prevail...”

Charles Fillmore

Dear God, you are greater than the forces of chaos and destruction.

I embrace love and hope. I accept peace and joy.

I choose compassion and kindness. I express generosity and goodwill.

I demonstrate your grace, and I bless the world you have given us.

All shall be well. And so it is.

February 24 – **Rest and know**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The thought of God swallows up all other thinking...The stilling of all the thoughts of the mind gives one opportunity to look through illusion and see the Soul at the depths, as one sees the bottom of the lake when its waters are clear and at rest. This ability to rest in yourself, blissful, serene...[makes one] able to perform a...complete concentration upon anything...Knowing God, you know all things.” *Annie Rix Militz*

The contemplatives and mystics among us can make spiritual experiences sound profound, and they are. But they aren't strange or difficult to achieve. When we think on God, we are thinking of what is forever Good, and focusing on Good directs us toward more good. Sitting in the Silence, experiencing the divine in delicious stillness, our anxieties are relieved and we are blessed with moments of insights and clarity. Resting in God, we find we know - perhaps more answers than we realized earlier - but even more importantly, we know that ultimately, all is well.

I know and declare that all is well.

February 25 – **Judgment or peace**

Rev. Dr. Nancy Davis

“Release all judgment towards yourself and others.” *Holy Spirit*

One day on my way to work, I heard, “Release all judgment towards yourself and others.” I knew this thought was the ‘still small voice speaking for God.’ As I pondered this thought, I began to realize how judgmental I really was. I was shocked to honestly notice my thoughts. I observed myself being the self-appointed fashion police, as I internally commented on people's outfits as I drove by. Then, I started to notice the harsh thoughts I had towards myself.

As I started to replace these thoughts with just one word, “blessings,” my experience began to change. It felt like I was losing oppressive weight that I did not know I was carrying. The phrase, “lightness of being” captures my feeling.

Later, I recognized the life changing teachings of *A Course in Miracles*.

“Judgment and love are opposites. From one comes all the sorrows of the world. But from the other comes the peace of God.” (W-p11.352.h)

I choose peace today. Namaste.

February 26 – **I am**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“‘I AM,’ spoken upward, toward the good, the true, is sure to out-picture in visible good, in success, in happiness.” *H. Emilie Cady*

I Am is one of the biblical names for divinity. When we know or believe that “I am” *something*, that knowing (or believing) tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. And what we say repeatedly, we will eventually believe. So, if I say, “I am weak” or “I am not very smart” or “I am always messing up” or “I am unlucky”...I will be planting seeds of self-doubt that may eventually become beliefs and even experiences. Never attach something negative to the divine name: *I AM*. So, empowering statements like, “I am resilient” and “I am wise and wonderful” and “I am always learning and growing” and “I am abundantly blessed” are also forming beliefs and shaping experiences. Let us be mindful of what we are pulling into our “I-Am-ness” and let us speak our “I AM” toward the good!

I Am a child of God!

February 27 – **Christ**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The Universal Christ is trying to communicate at the deepest intuitive level that there is only One Life, One Death, and One Suffering on this earth. We are all invited to ride the one wave, which is the only wave there is. Call it Reality, if you wish. But we are all in this together.” *Richard Rohr*

Christ is God’s anointed (and the anointing itself). *Christ* is principle, presence, divine idea, and ideal nature. *Christ* is unconquerable hero and suffering servant, human experience and cosmic reality. Jesus is the *Christ* image of Christian story and ritual, but “the *Christ* essence” is universal. Wherever we encounter pure love, unconditional acceptance, abundant compassion, and an awareness of divinity expressing in and through the mundane world, we are engaging the *Christ*. *Christ*, then, reminds us of our unity with God, and with all life. That unity, that wholeness, that “salvation” is our Truth, our Reality, our Life. *Christ* communicates, as Father Rohr writes, that “we are all in this together.”

**“Christ in me, the hope of glory.” Alleluia! Amen.*

**Colossians 1.27*

February 28 – **Heaven in within you**

A reflection by Cynthia Bourgeault (from The Wisdom of Jesus)

“The [Realm] of Heaven is...not a place you go to, but a place you come from. It is a whole new way of looking at the world, a transformed awareness that literally turns this world into a different place...This awareness sees no separation – not between God and humans, not between humans and other humans...a complete, mutual indwelling: I am in God, God is in you, you are in God, we are in each other. [Jesus’] most beautiful symbol for this is in the teaching in John 15 where he says, ‘I am the vine; you are the branches. Abide in me as I in you’...While he does indeed claim that ‘[God] and I are one’ – a statement so blasphemous to Jewish ears that it nearly gets him stoned – he does not see this as an exclusive privilege but something shared by all human beings.”

JUST A THOUGHT

“WHEN WE KNOW GOD WE BECOME CONSCIOUS OF OUR AT-ONE-MENT WITH [GOD].”

ALBERT GRIER

February 29 – **We are connected to everyone**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Since...we as individuals are connected to everyone else on earth, then we must also take responsibility for the happiness of our loved ones and friends. As the saying goes, ‘if you neighbor’s house is burning, can you really be safe?’...there is no true revolution of the self without extending ourselves toward others.” *Woody Hochswender, et al.*

Most of us are religious (or spiritual) for personal reasons. We want to be happier, or we enjoy ritual and study, or we needed some kind of healing and religion was one of our therapies. But as “personal” as our faith may be, we won’t grow much if we are only concerned with our own needs, privilege, or preferences. Spirituality not only offers us hope and joy, it also challenges us to care about the well-being of others. Our lives are connected to other lives. If we want to be our best, we must also want the best for others...ALL others.

*I pray for my happiness and well-being, and
for the happiness and well-being of all people. Amen.*

March 1 – **Ultimate reality**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“You are loved just for being who you are, just for existing. You don't have to do anything to earn it. Your shortcomings, your lack of self-esteem...social and economic success--none of that matters. No one can take this love away from you, and it will always be here.” *Ram Dass*

God is love. God is omnipresent. God is Ultimate Reality. So God is really all there is, and if God is love, that means Love is all there is. We don't always feel love in a sentimental sense, and we may not always trust that we are loved. We certainly don't always behave lovingly. And yet, Love is what is True, what is really Real. Since Love is what is true, it is our truth. We don't have to earn it and we can't lose it. We are loved. We are love.

Divine Love is my Truth. Love is what is really Real. And so it is.

JUST A THOUGHT

“WE ARE ALL AFFECTING THE WORLD EVERY MOMENT, WHETHER WE MEAN TO OR NOT. OUR ACTIONS AND STATES OF MIND MATTER, BECAUSE WE'RE INTERCONNECTED WITH ONE ANOTHER.”

RAM DASS

March 2 – **I pray**

by Carrie F. Munz (Prayer-Meditations)

Prayer does not change God, law, or the Christ-Self. Why then do we pray?: That we may commune with our [God], that we may change ignorance for light, that we may lift ourselves away from our personal concepts into truer understanding. We receive light only from the source of Light. Light, wisdom, power, life are all different expressions of the same presence. I pray to turn my thought to the one presence that I may tune in, receive, and know.

...Infinite Source of eternal Being, I open wide my inmost self to Thee. Thy presence fills the universe and includes all manifestation. I am that I Am. I am one with universal Being. Divine love holds me forever within itself.. I seek that which is true and eternal, that I may consciously abide in Thee. Thy Intelligence guides me, thy Life lives me, thy Power energizes me, thy Love holds me, thy Peace fills me, thy Goodness cares for me. These are thy Truths...thy rock upon which I stand...

March 3 – **Commitment to love**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Christian life is a commitment to love...” *Ilia Delio, OSF*

Jesus welcomed children when other adults overlooked them. Jesus respected women when other men exploited them. Jesus praised Samaritans when others in his community condemned them. Jesus ministered to people others considered untouchable, and ate with people others thought should “stay in their place.” Jesus fed people who were hungry, defended people who were scorned, and even confronted the injustices of empire because he loved his people too much to stay silent while they suffered. Jesus is my model of Justice-Love “in the flesh”, and being Christian means trying follow Jesus’ example. Every time I love, I am following in Jesus’ blessed path.

I will allow myself to love more today, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

“MAY WE BECOME AS GOOD AS WE ARE MEANT TO BE, AND MAY WE SEE GOODNESS IN EVERY PERSON, EVEN AS JESUS DID; EVEN AS GOD DOES. AMEN.”

DURRELL WATKINS

March 4 – **Say yes**

Rev. Anne R. Atwell

“Split off from each other, neither darkness nor light is fit for human habitation. The moment we say ‘yes’ to both of them and join their paradoxical dance, the two conspire to make us healthy and whole.”

Parker Palmer

It is not enough to give thanks when everything is going our way. We must continue to be thankful when we are struggling and when everything seems difficult. It is in the co-mingling of the joy and the sorrow, the beautiful and the unpleasant, where we find God’s ever present and unconditional love. Be open to the infinite possibilities that life brings us in all of our experiences and know that the Divine embrace is always with you.

*Holy One, may I be open to you through all my life experiences.
I affirm your love is always with me and I will say “yes” to
everything that will make me healthy and whole. Amen.*

**March 5 – There is good for me and I ought to have it
by Emma Curtis Hopkins**

There is good for me and I ought to have it. You are sure of this. It is the foundation statement of your being. One may not admit that there is any God, or Great Being, to whom he [or she] owes allegiance, but [one can] be sure that there is good for him [or her], which he [or she] ought to have...God is called Good. Good is God. There is no other God but Good. If everything and everybody is filled with the Good, then there is no place or space that this God is not. We can speak of the Good as omnipresent...God is omnipresent Good. Good has no other power to oppose it. It is omnipotent. God is omnipotent Good.

JUST A THOUGHT

“THE HEALING CHRIST REFERS NOT TO JESUS ALONE, BUT TO THE CHRIST IDENTITY WHICH IS THE CORE OF OUR OWN BEING, AND THAT OF THE COSMOS. JESUS WAS THE RABBI FROM NAZARETH. CHRIST IS GOD’S PERFECT IDEA OF HUMANITY, ENCOMPASSING BOTH GENDERS EQUALLY. JESUS SOUGHT TO AWAKEN US ALL TO OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, TO OUR ESSENTIAL ONENESS WITH...THE ABSOLUTE.”

ROBERT WINTERHALTER

March 6 – It is always time to love

Rev. Lynda Pantoja

“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.” Annie Dillard

As we do semiannually, next Sunday, we will become USA timekeepers as we change the time in every single one of the time devices we own. This event reminds me of Unity Minister Linda Martella-Whitsett who wrote: “Time waits for no one. You cannot see time or hold it in your hand. You can spend time and invest time but not own time. The time you save today cannot be banked for tomorrow. Time is a mental construct: insubstantial, though it feels concrete; elusive as well as noticeable; boundless even as you count it down.” As complicated as time is, I recognize that I can do more than just count it; I can and I will make it count, by being and sharing Love, always, through the end of time...

The time for Love is now and Divine Love guides me as I do so! Amen.

March 7 - Love reigns

Rev. Kevin Tisdol

“Stand fast in the faith, and love one another, all of you, and be not offended at my sufferings.” *St. Perpetua*

Looking at Christianity's past, we find countless accounts of bravery in the face of persecution. The early followers of Jesus' teachings, when discovered, would often face consequences, often death. It's hard to believe but in some places, it's still dangerous for our sisters and brothers to openly practice their faith because theirs isn't their region's majority religion. The overriding message of the martyrs of the past and today's defenders of our right to either embrace or eschew any religious walk is that we must love one another. My sacred texts have my brother Jesus telling us to love one another and I embrace that instruction as the foundation upon which I build my life.

Dear God, by standing in faith and love for all you have created, I better understand my obligation to protect everyone's right to find love. Amen.

March 8 – Spiritual understanding

by Annie Rix Militz (Primary Lessons in Christian Living & Healing)

The natural unfoldment of the spiritual understanding may be compared to a child who, in learning arithmetic, studies the multiplication table, and according to the teacher's instructions repeats it over and over. When s/he begins to apply his/her knowledge to the working of problems [the child] perhaps finds it slow work to remember all the answers to the combinations of figures...But there comes a time when the moment he/she sees [two numbers] associated in multiplication [the child] knows the answer instantly. This is because of faithfulness to the principle of mathematics.

As Christ...reveals to you the Allness of God and the unreality of evil, you apply yourself to the law...You acknowledge the presence of God only, and deny the reality of that which is not God.

Perhaps when there is an opportunity to apply your principles it does not seem easy. Perhaps the problem is sorrow, and you do not readily realize the peace of God. Perhaps you must repeat your affirmations and denials some time before the delusion disappears. But you are faithful, and soon the day is upon you when for you to look upon sorrow is to cause it to flee away...

No effort put forth in the name of God is ever lost.

JUST A THOUGHT

“CHOOSE TO BE OPTIMISTIC. IT FEELS BETTER.”

HH THE DALAI LAMA

March 9 – The good side of religion
by Philip Gulley (*Living the Quaker Way*)

I am a better person because of religion. It has taught me to care for the poor, to love the unlovable, to seek the best in others, and to forgive. Religion has exposed me to people I likely wouldn't have encountered any other way. Consequently, it has helped me overcome my prejudices, widened my world, and taught me realities and truths different from my own. Religion has given me an appreciation for mystery and wonder, has created in me a desire to know more, and has motivated my movement from gnat-straining legalism to open-handed liberalism. It has transformed me from an American partisan to a citizen of the world...Most every admirable quality I possess, if I possess any at all, is due in large part to my loving, life-giving religion.

JUST A THOUGHT

**“I CAN NEVER STRAY BEYOND GOD’S TENDER CARE,
FOR OUR GOD IS OMNIPRESENT, HERE AND THERE
AND EVERYWHERE.”**

CLARA H. SCOTT

March 10 – Religion’s shadow side
By Philip Gulley (*Living the Quaker Way*)

Regrettably, religion has not always been a friend to equality and justice...I have seen in religion goodness and beauty so profound as to be breathtaking...But religion has a shadow side, for it's likely that for every life positively influenced by religion, just as many lives have been diminished by it. Slavery persisted not only because of its perceived economic value but also because many people of faith [supported it]. Wherever war is present, one does not have to look far to find the hand of religion...The chief barrier for full marriage equality for gays and lesbians [was] religious objections. Just as religion promotes much good, so too does it bring out the worst in some people.

JUST A THOUGHT

"I PRAY FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE HURTING, THAT THEY BE FILLED WITH AIR AND LIGHT. AIR AND LIGHT HEAL; THEY SOMEHOW GET INTO THOSE DARK, MUSTY PLACES, LIKE SPIRITUAL ANTIBIOTICS."

ANNE LAMOTT

**March 11 – God never calls us to be unloving
by Philip Gulley (*Living the Quaker Way*)**

The test of love is the central theme of the Christian life...God will never call us to a life or work that is anything less than loving. I [became a supporter of] marriage equality when I discerned that denying homosexuals the same blessing of marriage I enjoy was not only selfish but also unloving. I could no longer believe God was honored or pleased by my efforts to deny others the joy of loving, committed relationships. Because the insights and leadings gained in our search for truth must meet the criteria of love, I was able to move beyond an exclusive tradition.

March 12 – – A spirituality of love

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

The previous three lessons (March 9, 10, 11) by Quaker theologian Philip Gulley's book *Living The Quaker Way* have contrasted the ways that religion can be used to heal or to harm. For religion to be healthy and for it to help us be as healthy and happy as possible, it must be fair, inclusive, and loving. The call of Christ is the call to love. When religion is used to control or condemn, it has been weaponized. Religion at its best calls us to be our best, and we are at our best when we are loving.

Forgive me for the times I have been unloving. Heal the wounds I have suffered and the wounds I have inflicted when love was withheld. Help me to love myself and then to love my neighbors as I love myself. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

"ETERNAL GOD: YOU CREATED THE WORLD OUT OF LOVE AND A DESIRE TO SHARE YOURSELF WITH HUMANITY. AS MEMBERS OF YOUR BODY, MAY WE BE MOTIVATED BY THIS SAME LOVE AND GENEROSITY TOWARD YOUR PEOPLE. MAY OUR WORDS AND ACTIONS SHOW TO ALL THE WORLD THAT WE ARE IN YOUR SERVICE...AMEN."

SISTERS OF MERCY

March 13 – **God's will**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Do you see the wide freedom God has given all of us, knowing we are happiest when we are free to choose the course of our lives, constrained by only one condition, and that is this: that whatever we do, it is God’s will for us to be happy and whole, while being mindful and considerate of others.” *Philip Gulley*

In his book, *Unlearning God: How Unbelieving Helped Me Believe*, Quaker minister Philip Gulley discusses the notion that God has a plan for our lives. He concludes that God’s will for us is general rather than specific. We are completely free to choose whether or not to have children, where we live, what career path we pursue, even what faith tradition we embrace. Whatever life choices we make, God’s will is that while we pursue our interests we serve the cause of justice, mercy, and humility in the process.

*In accordance with God's will, I seek to
do justice, love mercy, and live humbly. Amen.*

March 14 – **Truth in love**

Rev. Ty Bradley

“Orthodoxy and heresy were for another time long gone...I think today’s fundamental questions center in the inevitable of any era: how to love who and what one fears, in chosen compassion, integrity, and wisdom.”
Rev. Dr. Lisa M. Hess

Religion that confidently tells us what is right to think and believe shelters us from the frightening unknowns of an otherwise deeply ambiguous world. It is a double-edged sword, however, as we discover when what we are told is right/true conflicts with what we discover to be right/true for ourselves by way of our own experience. Do we allow our traditional beliefs to cause us to become objects of our own fear? Or do we determine to ask more from our faith and theologies, that they teach how to embrace rather than exclude the differences we fear in one another and in ourselves?

Perfect Love, cast out our fear of difference. Teach us to love what we discover beyond the safety of our beliefs. Amen.

March 15 – **Finding hope within**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“If you want to know me, look inside your heart.” Tao te Ching

Fundamentalism is a view that says truth is narrow, only a few have it, and those who have it need to defend it. This creates a needless adversarial mindset that leads to emotional and physical violence and much suffering in our world. What if instead of focusing on divisive “fundamentals” we simply looked within to find “the better angels of our nature”? What if we discovered that we were capable of compassion, optimism, curiosity, playfulness, and trust? What if rather than relying on rules that tell us who is and who isn’t acceptable, we simply dared to love and live with boundless hope? We might find we no longer need so many fundamentals and life might prove to be more abundant.

Today I look within and embrace the presence of divine Hope. Amen.

March 16 – **Quiet joy**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“When from our better selves we have too long/Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop/Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired/How gracious, how benign, is Solitude.” William Wordsworth

Intentionally entering into the Silence is a primary element of my spirituality. I make time for Silence every day. Sometimes, the Silence is regimented and disciplined, as I sit on a cushion for 15, 20, or even 45 minutes. Other times, the Silence is a stolen 5 or 10 minutes in a comfortable chair, or simply practicing mindful awareness in the shower or lying in bed. Most weeks, there is an hour of delicious Silence as I receive deep tissue massage and I simply breath and take note of my stiff muscles and the relief they are experiencing. Centering Prayer, Meditation, Silence...Call it what you will, is rich and wonderful and necessary. Spend some time in the Silence today, and notice the tranquil joy that you become.

I now quiet my mind and focus on my breathing as I enter into a moment of Silence...

March 17 – Learn to stay positive

by Mildred Mann

“As soon as you hear anything you do not like, instantly say ‘God is taking care of this.’ Affirm it in whatever way you want, but affirm. Say ‘I know the Truth about this. Truth is perfect harmony. I have nothing to fear.’ Don’t take my word for it. Try it on the next fright. ‘Keep thy heart with all diligence,’ (keep the subconscious mind with all diligence) ‘for out of it are the issues of life.’

...Never stress the negative aspect. For instance, if you want to get rid of an illness, do not say ‘I want to get rid of this illness.’ Say ‘I realize that I am a child of God. God is in me and [God’s] wholeness is manifest in me now. I give thanks for a perfect healing.’ Then forget about it...Watch your thoughts, your words and your actions. Stay kind, stay positive, stay cheerful. It will take a little time and training, but so does everything in life that is worthwhile.”

JUST A THOUGHT

“HEAVEN IS WITHIN YOU. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE THOUGHTS OF SOMEONE ELSE, AND EVERYTHING TO DO WITH WHAT YOURSELF CHOOSE TO THINK.”

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

March 18 – Sharing a bit of heaven

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

"May you be filled with loving-kindness. May you be well. May you be peaceful and at ease. May you be happy." *Buddhist Blessing*

Try this prayer today. First, pray for those you love who are separated from you by physical distance. Say, “May you be filled with loving-kindness; may you be well. May you be peaceful and at ease; may you be happy.” Next, pray for community, national, even international leaders. Wish them love, health, peace, and joy. Next pray for people who are struggling in some way. Send them kindness as you pray for them to experience love, health, peace, and joy. Now pray even for people you don’t like, using the very same prayer. Finally, say the prayer for yourself. Notice how you feel after this time of prayer. It’s pretty heavenly, isn’t it?

*May we be filled with loving-kindness; may we be well.
May we be peaceful and at ease; may we be happy. Amen.*

March 19 – **God loves you**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The One Who is All loves you. The Mind of the Infinite is forever on you, thinking you, loving you, caring for you.” *John Randolph Price*

“The One Who is All loves you.” That’s a very healing statement. The All-in-all, expressing uniquely as me, is perfect Love and that Love can in no way exclude me. That means my sacred value is unquestionable! I am loveable because I am made in the image and likeness of divine Love. The ways I express Love actually express the divine Power that Love is. When I know who I really am, I have no need to participate in the oppression of others and I will never participate in my own oppression either. The One Who is All loves you...loves us all, all the time.

I am the manifestation of Love. I choose to remember this empowering truth here and now. And so it is!

March 20 - **Recognizing the holy**

Rev. Anne R. Atwell

“I wondered how I had forgotten that the whole world is the House of God. Who had persuaded me that God preferred four walls and a roof to wide-open spaces? When had I made the subtle switch myself, becoming convinced that church bodies and buildings were the safest and most reliable places to encounter the living God?”

Barbara Brown Taylor

One of the great joys and discoveries of my life is recognizing the presence of the Divine in the places and spaces of my life. When we focus solely on God within the church we may miss the God that is ever present in our daily experiences, in our encounters with others, in the busyness of working and playing and resting. Throughout this Lenten season, take some time to be more intentional about sensing the presence of God. Divine love and goodness is always there waiting for our recognition and embrace.

Holy Spirit, be present to me today. Amen.

March 21 – Christ within

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Each of us has a divine Self that is spiritual and perfect...That is the true [person]...and is what we sometimes call ‘the Christ within.’” *Emmet Fox*

My inner, true, spiritual Self is made in the glorious image and likeness of God. This is the Christ in me! This Christ Presence walks on top of the waves of discord, passes through walls of fear and limitation, multiplies the loaves of opportunity in my life, heals the sick thoughts that cause defeat and despair, emerges from the dark tomb of oppression and walks into the light of divine, abundant life. With this Christ Spirit all things are possible and so I am filled with indomitable hope and abundant joy.

In the name and the power of the Christ within, I declare that all is well in my life. I am happy, whole, wise, and free. Alleluia! And so it is.

JUST A THOUGHT

“THE SIMPLEST AND MOST CONCISE DEFINITION OF GOD IS A BIBLICAL ONE: ‘GOD IS LOVE.’ IT IS NOT GOD HAS LOVE, BUT GOD IS LOVE. AS TO WHERE GOD MAY BE FOUND, WE ARE TOLD THAT GOD IS OMNIPRESENT.”

HENRY WOOD

March 22 – Sowing seeds of abundant life

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“If we act virtuously, the seed we plant will result in happiness. If we act non-virtuously, suffering results.” *Sakyong Mipham*

“Jesus asked..., ‘Do you think that because these Galileans suffered...they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No! But unless you repent, you will all perish as they did’ (Luke 13.1-3). Bad things don’t happen because we are bad or because the gods hate us or because we were born under an unlucky star. In fact, sometimes we may not even know why something happened. But we do know that we are free to make choices, and when we choose wisely, things are more likely to improve. When we repent (make a positive change in attitude or behavior), we can know that we are actually improving our experience of life.

*God help me to develop a positive attitude
that will bring me hope and joy. Amen.*

March 23 – **Every person is precious**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“You are a child of God. If you are a child of God, then your neighbor[s]...are also children of God. That is why everyone is very precious.”

Masaharu Taniguchi

It seems that in the “game of life” we sometimes like to annoy one another. In fact, we play so rough sometimes that we actually hurt one another. Then, we have resentments, maybe even hatred. But forgiveness is also possible, and then healing. We won’t approve of every action, but we can remember that every “actor” is a child of God, probably doing the best they can in the moment. As we forgive we heal, and as we love we share healing. Today, let’s look beyond behavior to the divine spark that dwells in every person.

*Infinite Compassion, in your name I bless every person I know.
Even in my so-called enemies I choose to see your Presence, and
I love you in them as I release them to their highest Good. Amen.*

JUST A THOUGHT

“WE STAND FIRM IN GOD, THE ONE, OMNIPRESENCE...”

DIVINE SCIENCE FEDERATION INTERNATIONAL

March 24 – **Best wishes**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“As you travel through life, offer good wishes to each being you meet.”

Jack Kornfield

Thoughts are things. The energy of our thoughts can be very creative. So, when we choose thoughts that are pleasant, friendly, happy, funny, kind, generous, optimistic...we are actually contributing something meaningful to the atmosphere we all share. Sharing good wishes with others isn’t an empty act; in fact, sharing good wishes is prayer and prayer can make a real difference in people’s lives. Share your good wishes today. It might be exactly what someone needs.

*In this holy instant, I call to mind someone in need of comfort, strength,
guidance, or hope. I hold them mentally with love, and I send them a
smile from my heart to theirs. I wish you well, my friend. I wish you joy.
And so it is!*

March 25 – **There is an answer**

by Mary Kupferle

“If your heart has called in anguish for an answer to grief or pain or lack, if your thoughts have been in torment over any difficulty concerning yourself or another, take time now to be still and pray once more. Know that the perfect answer you seek already dwells within your heart and is bringing forth the peace, assurance, and strength you seek, the same as it dwelt within the heart of Jesus and brought forth the peace, assurance, and strength that enabled him to rise above all tribulation. Peace and satisfaction are your divine birthright as joint heir with the Christ. Be still and remember this, and remember that you were brought forth to be victor rather than vanquished, over-comer rather than the overcome. As you know this in the stillness of your own heart, a living answer will fire your being with renewed faith, cleanse you of the dross of unbelief and reveal the Truth... No matter what problem or difficulty you are facing today, God's answer is already on its way to you.”

JUST A THOUGHT

“EVERY THOUGHT YOU HAVE IMPACTS YOU.

BY SHIFTING IN THE MIDDLE OF A WEAKENING THOUGHT TO ONE
THAT STRENGTHENS YOU, YOU RAISE YOUR ENERGY VIBRATION...”

WAYNE DYER

March 26 – **Being a mother**

Rev. Marian Cavagnaro

“Being a mother is learning about strengths you didn’t know you had, and dealing with fears you didn’t know existed.” *Lina Wooten*

I remember this day, 39 years ago, when my sister and brother-in-law called and said two words, “Sara Kathleen”. Their first daughter and my god daughter/niece was born. Sara is now an amazing mother of two boys, Gavin, who is 8 ½ years old and Tommy, who is 6 years old. I am in awe, as I watch Sara be the best mother she can be to her sons, whether it is making meals, reading bedtime stories, helping with homework, attending sporting events, or hugging them as she washes away their tears when they are hurt or sad. We cherish all who have been a mother to us in our lives. With their strengths and fears may all mothers persevere.

Loving God, we give thanks for all the mother figures in our lives who have taught us the art of living and loving.

March 27 – **Beliefs are powerful**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“[The mind] will motivate you successfully to create your beliefs into real situations.” *Terry Cole-Whittaker*

We have many more beliefs than we often realize. A trauma in our childhood may create a sense of danger that we internalize. Fear that life is unsafe then causes us to see or experience scary situations over and over. Abandonment, loss, hardship, abuse, or repeated criticism in our early years can take root in our deeper minds as feelings of unworthiness and those feelings/beliefs are always seeking situations and circumstances to validate them. Much (maybe most) of our unhappiness is related in some way to negative beliefs we embraced early in life (sometimes before we could even speak). A spirituality that affirms us and that encourages us to affirm ourselves will help us replace negative beliefs with positive ones, and positive beliefs seek ways to express as well!

I am worthy of love, happiness, health, success, and prosperity.

March 28 – **We’re made for each other**

Rev. Ty Bradley

“As we are hardly authentically human if we refuse to acknowledge and accept the diverse other...so, too, we are hardly human if we do not resist what is an outrage against some neighbor’s humanity.” *Dr. Langdon Gilkey*

Many philosophers and theologians agree our personhood is only fully expressed in the context of our relationships. The late theologian Langdon Gilkey clarifies we must be intentional in opening ourselves in mutual exchange, not only with those with whom we most identify, but even more so those who we find to be uncomfortably different from us. As difficult as this alone is, Gilkey asserts we must do even more. To experience our humanity most fully, we must stand in solidarity with communities radically different than our own against whatever dehumanizing oppression they may face as a result of those differences.

Wise Creator, as we have been designed to do, may we fully realize our own humanity as we embrace and promote the full humanity of those least like us. Amen.

March 29 – **Mental gardening**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“From time to time, we all need to examine our lives, clear out the mental debris and set our thinking in order. Until we do this, our mind is like a beautiful garden that has become so overgrown with weeds that its beauty cannot shine through.” *Frank R. Richelieu*

The bible counsels, “Set your minds on things above...” (Colossians 3.2). That doesn’t mean we should always be cloud watching, nor does it mean we should be “so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good”. It means that we do well to develop the habit of thinking “high” thoughts - thoughts that are kind, generous, optimistic, healing, and committed to good purposes. The fear thoughts, regrets, jealousies, and other “weeds” can spoil our mental gardens unless we remove them with prayer, study, and daily practice. Let’s become faithful mental gardeners!

I choose “high” thoughts today, thoughts that bring me joy and that remind me of my sacred value and great potential. Amen.

March 30 – **Never alone**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“A sense of separation from God is the only lack you really need to correct.” *A Course in Miracles*

If God is omnipresent, then separation from God simply isn’t possible. The Psalmist asked, “Where could I go from your spirit?” And St. Luke (in the book of Acts) quotes the Apostle Paul parroting a Greek poet: “In God we live and move and have our being.” We could never be separated from or rejected by the omnipresent Spirit of universal Life. When we heal the sense of separation from our Source, then we find we are very powerful and capable of accomplishing great things.

There is one Power, one Presence, one Substance and I am part of It, one with It, an expression of It. I am never alone because I am Eternity expressing in time, an individuation of the great Whole, a spark of Infinite Light. With gratitude for this Reality, I expect and accept blessings today. And so it is.

March 31 – From “**The Over-Soul**”
by **Ralph Waldo Emerson**



“Ineffable is the union of [humans] and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person, who in his [or her] integrity worships God, becomes God; yet forever and ever the influx of this better and universal self is new and unsearchable. It inspires awe and astonishment.

How dear, how soothing to [one], arises the idea of God, peopling the lonely place, effacing the scars of our mistakes and disappointments!

When we have broken our god of tradition, and ceased from our god of rhetoric, then may God fire the heart with [God’s own] presence. It is the doubling of the heart itself, nay, the infinite enlargement of the heart with a power of growth to a new infinity on every side.”

JUST A FEW THOUGHTS
(ABOUT PRAYER)

“Our understanding of the meaning of prayer [is]...an intimate, holy communion with the fountain of our being, rather than as a net of beseeching, entreating, supplicating. God is omnipresent...We cannot instruct this all-inclusive Spirit with regard to our needs, or [Its divine] attributes. As we cannot increase the flow of life from this fountain because it is infinite, why beg that increase? All that we may do is to increase our own capacity of drinking from that fountain.” *Kathleen Besly (Divine Science)*

“The purpose of Buddhist prayer is to awaken our inherent inner capacities of strength, compassion and wisdom rather than to petition external forces based on fear, idolizing, and worldly and/or heavenly gain. Buddhist prayer is...a practice of inner reconditioning. Buddhist prayer...points us to the blessings of Life.” *Buddhist Faith Fellowship of Connecticut*

“[In praying for health] the appeal for help is not made to a God who dwells apart from [Its] creation, but to the Divine Mind who called all things into being, who dwells in all things, and who from [Its] very essence gives them existence...we pray for help to the Divine Mind who dwells in us and supplies us constantly with life and with health. [We emphasize] the Divine in [us].” *Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein (Jewish Science)*



Sunshine Cathedral Weekly Worship Resources

Jan 5 – **Healers in a Hurting World**
+The Gospel According to Matthew
(2.1-2, 10-11):

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem...And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. And on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

+ Another Gospel story (Mark 1. 29-34, 39-41):

On leaving the synagogue Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her. He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them.

When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. The whole town was gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons...

Jesus went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

A leper came to him [and kneeling down] begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean."

Prayer after readings: *Dear God: We wish to be healers in a hurting world. May our hands be your hands. May your grace flow through us to bless others. Amen.*

Jan 12 – **Soul Healing**

+The Gospel According to Mark (2.13-19, 21-22):

Jesus went out along the sea. As he passed by, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And Levi got up and followed him. While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many who followed him. Some scribes who were Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and

tax collectors and said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus heard this and said to them [that], “Those who are well do not need a physician...I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were accustomed to fasting. People came to Jesus and objected, “Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” Jesus answered them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? ...No one sews new cloth patches onto old clothes. No one pours new wine into old wineskins...New wine must be poured into new containers.”

The Gospel continues (2.1-12):

When Jesus returned to Capernaum... it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Child, your sins are forgiven.”

Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?” Jesus immediately knew what they were thinking, so he said, “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, pick up your mat and walk’? But that you may know that the a Human One has authority to forgive sins on earth”— he said to the paralytic, “I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home.” He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”

Prayer after readings: *Heal our souls, O God. Give us the grace to encourage one another, to affirm ourselves and others, to remember that the past is past and the future has infinite possibilities. Amen.*

Jan 19 – **Spiritual Abundance**

Wisdom from the Scriptures (Matthew 12.34 & Isaiah 55.11):

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks...So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth...It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

The Wisdom of Nona Brooks

“...Jesus believed in supply. He fed the hungry multitude. Toiling fishers, following his directions, found their nets filled to bursting...Jesus knew that the [Divine] supplies abundantly...more than [we] can think or ask...Today I rejoice

in knowing that God is my immediate and abundant supply. I trust [God] for my every need.”

+ *The Gospel According to Mark (4.21-32)*:

Jesus said, “Is a lamp brought in to be placed under a bushel basket or under a bed, and not to be placed on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden except to be made visible; nothing is secret except to come to light. Anyone who has ears to hear ought to hear.”

He also told them, “Take care what you hear. The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you, and still more will be given to you. To the one who has, more will be given; from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”

He said, “This is how it is with the realm of God; it is as if one were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, *somehow*. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, the harvester wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come.”

And he said, “To what shall we compare the realm of God, or what parable can we use for it? It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade.”

Prayer after readings: *Loving God, we live in an abundant universe. We sow, and we reap. We rest, and we renew. We are fed, and we grow stronger. We give, and we are blessed. We seek, and we find. Today we trust and believe that all shall be well; indeed, all is well. Thank you, God. Amen.*

Jan 26 – **Standing Up to the Legions**

The Wisdom the prophet Isaiah (14.3):

God will give you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear.

The Wisdom of the Dalai Lama:

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”

+ *The Gospel According to Mark (5.1-20)*:

They came to the other side of the sea, to the territory of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, at once a man from the tombs who had an unclean spirit met him. The man had been dwelling among the tombs, and no one could restrain him any longer, even with a chain. In fact, he had frequently been

bound with shackles and chains, but the chains had been pulled apart by him and the shackles smashed, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the hillsides he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones. Catching sight of Jesus from a distance, he ran up and prostrated himself before him, crying out in a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me!" (He had been saying to him, "Unclean spirit, come out of the man!") He asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "Legion is my name. There are many of us." And he pleaded earnestly with him not to drive them away from that territory.

Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside. And they pleaded with him, "Send us into the swine. Let us enter them." And he let them, and the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine. The herd of about two thousand rushed down a steep bank into the sea, where they were drowned. The swineherds ran away and reported the incident in the town and throughout the countryside. And people came out to see what had happened. As they approached Jesus, they caught sight of the man who had been possessed by Legion, sitting there clothed and in his right mind. And they were seized with fear. Those who witnessed the incident explained to them what had happened to the possessed man and to the swine. Then they began to beg him to leave their district. As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed pleaded to remain with him. But he would not permit him but told him instead, "Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord has mercifully done for you." Then the man went off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed.

Prayer after readings: *Fill us with life, and joy, and hope, loving God. We will share with the world how you have lifted us up, and how your grace is equal to every need. Amen.*

Feb 2 – The Life-giving Gospel

+ *The Gospel According to Mark* (5.21-24):

When Jesus had crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him.

The story continues (5.25-34)

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?' "

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

The rest of the story (5.35-43):

While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"

Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha kum!*" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Prayer after readings: *Heal our fears and give us the grace to live joyfully and abundantly, holy God. Amen.*

Feb 9 – The Disruptive Gospel

+ *The Gospel According to Mark (6.2-13):*

When the sabbath came Jesus began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What

kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house." So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

He went around to the villages in the vicinity teaching. He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick—no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." So they went off and preached repentance. They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

The story continues (Mark 6.14-29):

King Herod heard about it, for his fame had become widespread, and people were saying, "John the Baptizer has been raised from the dead; that is why mighty powers are at work in him." Others were saying, "He is Elijah"; still others, "He is a prophet like any of the prophets." But when Herod learned of it, he said, "It is John whom I beheaded. He has been raised up."

Herod was the one who had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had married. John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." Herodias harbored a grudge against him and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so. Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man, and kept him in custody. When he heard him speak he was very much perplexed, yet he liked to listen to him. She had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his courtiers, his military officers, and the leading men of Galilee. Herodias's own daughter came in and performed a dance that delighted Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask of me whatever you wish and I will grant it to you." He even swore [many things] to her, "I will grant you whatever you ask of me, even to half of my kingdom." She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the Baptist." The girl hurried back to the king's presence and made her request, "I want you to give me at once on a platter the head of John the Baptist." The king was deeply distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests he did not wish to break his word to her. So he promptly dispatched an

executioner with orders to bring back his head. He went off and beheaded him in the prison. He brought in the head on a platter and gave it to the girl. The girl in turn gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Prayer after readings: *The good news for the people of God challenges the status quo and systems of oppression. We embrace and give thanks for the disruptive gospel. Amen.*

Feb 16 – As Within, So Without

We listen for Ancient Wisdom (from Proverbs 23.7, the Upanishads, and the Buddha)

“As one thinks, one is...Let us purify our thoughts. What we think is what we are...What we think, we become.”

+ *The Gospel According to Mark (7.1-16, 21-23)*

Now when the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. (For the Pharisees...do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles [and beds].) So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, “Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?” He responded, “Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written:

‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts.’

You disregard God’s commandment but cling to human tradition.” He went on to say, “How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and ‘Whoever curses father or mother shall die.’ Yet you say, ‘If a person says to father or mother, “Any support you might have had from me is *qorban*”’ (meaning, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. You nullify the word of God in favor of your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many such things.” He summoned the crowd again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile.”

From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile.”

Prayer after readings: *Let us think thoughts of hope, goodwill, generosity, love, peace, healing, and joy. As we focus on these blessings, we will manifest them. Thanks be to God. Amen.*

Feb 23 – Growing Into Greatness

The Wisdom of Ralph Waldo Emerson

“If you want to be great and successful, choose people who are great and successful and walk side by side with them.”

The Wisdom of Joseph Campbell

“When we quit thinking primarily about ourselves and our own self-preservation, we undergo a truly heroic transformation of consciousness.”

+ *The Gospel According to Mark* (8.27-30, 34-37; 9.1-8):

Now Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” They said in reply, “John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets.” And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter said to him in reply, “You are the Messiah.” Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “Those who wish to come after me must deny themselves, take up their cross bars, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save their lives will lose them, but whoever loses a life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit one’s life?

He also said to them, “Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the realm of God has come in power.” After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; then from the cloud came a voice, “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.” Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them.

Prayer after readings: *Holy One, miracle stories remind us that there are new ways to look at things and new ways to experience life. The greatest miracle is love, and we are grateful for it. Amen.*

Feb 26 – Ash Wednesday

+ *The Gospel According to Mark (9.33-37):*

They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, Jesus began to ask them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest. Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." Taking a child he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."

Prayer after readings: *We know, O God, that you wish for us to be kind, generous, welcoming, and happy. May your will be done in our lives. Amen.*

March 1 – Following Jesus to God's Kin-dom

The Wisdom of Seneca:

"A kingdom founded on injustice never lasts."

The Wisdom of Nietzsche:

"The '[Realm] of Heaven' is a condition of the heart - not something that comes 'upon the earth' or 'after death.'"

+ *The Gospel According to Mark (10.17-31)*

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before Jesus, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth."

And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the realm of God!" And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is for those who

trust in riches to enter the realm of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “It may not be humanly possible, but all things are possible with God.”

Peter began to say to him, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left home or family or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first.”

Prayer after readings: *God, you are our home, our source, our supply, our life, our hope. We live in, by, through, and for you. Bless us to be a blessing to others. Heal us to be healers in your world. Amen.*

March 8 – **Ministry is Service**

The Wisdom of Norman Vincent Peale

“When you become detached mentally from yourself and concentrate on helping people with their difficulties, you will be able to cope with your own more effectively. Somehow, the act of self-giving is a personal power-releasing factor.”

+ *The Gospel According to Mark (10.35-52)*

And James and John, the sons of Zeb’edee, came forward to Jesus, and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to him, “We are able.”

Jesus responded, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their elite exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be servant of all. For the Human One also came not to be served but to serve...”

And they came to Jericho; and as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude, Bartimae'us, a blind beggar...was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, descendant of David, have mercy on me!" And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and said...to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Master, let me receive my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

Prayer after readings: *Lord, may we seek to lift up others more than we seek self-promotion. May we be truly concerned with the pain, the struggles, the burdens of others. May we be healers in your name. Amen.*

Healing Rays Prayer: *I am a magnet for miracles. I am a miracle worker. I am blessed to be a blessing. And so it is.*

Stewardship Thought: "The world of the generous gets larger and larger."
Proverbs 11.24

March 15 – Sacred Sharing

The Wisdom of Charles Spurgeon

"In all of my years of service to my Lord, I have discovered a truth that has never failed and has never been compromised. That truth is that it is beyond the realm of possibilities that one has the ability to out give God. Even if I give the whole of my worth to God, God will find a way to give back to me much more than I gave."

+ The Gospel According to Mark (12.13-17)

And they sent to Jesus some of the Pharisees and some of the Hero'di-ans, to entrap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true, and ... you do not regard the positions people hold, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a coin, and let me look at it." And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at him.

Prayer after readings: *May we give to you gladly, lovingly, and faithfully, holy God; and may we allow you to give through us to the world. Amen.*

Healing Rays Prayer: *God of Abundance, I am thankful that you bountifully supply all my needs. Amen.*

Stewardship Thought: “Bring the whole tith...’Test me in this,’ says the Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.’” Malachi 3.10

March 22 – **What God Desires**

The Wisdom of Norman Vincent Peale

“Ironically, those who reject God may not recognize that they [actually] love God. But people who [encounter] God know that in God is life – life that ‘gave light to everyone.’ Get the life force activated in you, and your enthusiasm will never run down. All your life you will [have] life that is perpetually new. That is how it is meant to be...”

+ *The Gospel According to Mark (12.28-34, 38-44)*

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that Jesus answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that God is one, and there is no other; and to love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the realm of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any question.

And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.” And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him, and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all

contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living.”

Prayer after readings: *To love, to share, to care...these are the virtues and values to which you call us, dear God. Today, we hear the call, and we say ‘yes’ to it. Amen.*

Healing Rays Prayer: *May God’s kin-dom come and God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.*

Stewardship Thought: “Giving first to God is an act of stewardship and an expression of faith.” Chris Deets

March 29 – **The Coming of Christ**

The Wisdom of William Warch

Just as all elements of the ocean are in one drop of ocean water, all that God is, is in you...The word of God is an idea sent forth by Divine Mind and that word is the Christ in you. Just as every word you send forth contains your level of consciousness, the word of God, the Christ, contains perfection. This perfect word, or idea, is placed within all humankind. This perfect idea is the [child] of God, the offspring. Where is the Christ? Wherever you see a man, woman, or child.

...your personal contact with God is a warm loving experience. This is why so many people love Jesus. They actually see the Christ in him and experience God through him as well as themselves. The brighter your Christ light shines through [you]...People will see that the Christ resides in you.

+ *The Gospel According to Mark* (13.5-7, 9-11, 14, 21-23, 26, 32-33, 37)

Jesus said to Peter, John, James and Andrew, “Be careful! Don’t let anyone fool you. Many people will come and use my name. They will say, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and they will fool many people. You will hear about wars that are being fought. And you will hear stories about other wars beginning. But don’t be afraid...

You must be careful! There are people who will arrest you and take you to be judged for being my followers. They will beat you in their worship assemblies. You will be forced to stand before kings and governors. You will tell them about me. Before the end comes, the Good News must be told to all nations. Even when you are arrested and put on trial, don’t worry about what you will say. Say whatever God tells you at the time...

You will see ‘the terrible thing that causes destruction.’

...Everyone in Judea at that time should run away to the mountains.

Someone might say to you at that time, 'Look, there is the Messiah!' Or another person might say, 'There is the Messiah!' But don't believe them. False messiahs and false prophets will come and do miracles and wonders, trying to fool the people God has chosen, if that is possible. So be careful...

Then people will see the Human One coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

No one knows when that day or time will be. The Human One and the angels in heaven don't know when that day or time will be. Only God knows. Be careful!

Always be ready. You don't know when that time will be.

I tell you this, and I say it to everyone: Be ready!

Prayer after readings: *The Christ Nature we behold in Jesus dwells also in us; let us let this holy light shine brightly today. Amen.*

Healing Rays Prayer: *Christ in me, the hope of glory! Amen.*

Stewardship Thought: "God loves a cheerful giver." The Apostle Paul

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“[God], I acknowledge thy loving goodness everywhere, even within myself. Thou art the Life that animates me. Thou art the Power that sustains me. Thou art the Wisdom that heals me. Thou art the Love that surrounds me. I rest in, and trust thy unfailing Intelligence to guide me in all my ways...”

Daisy Baum



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