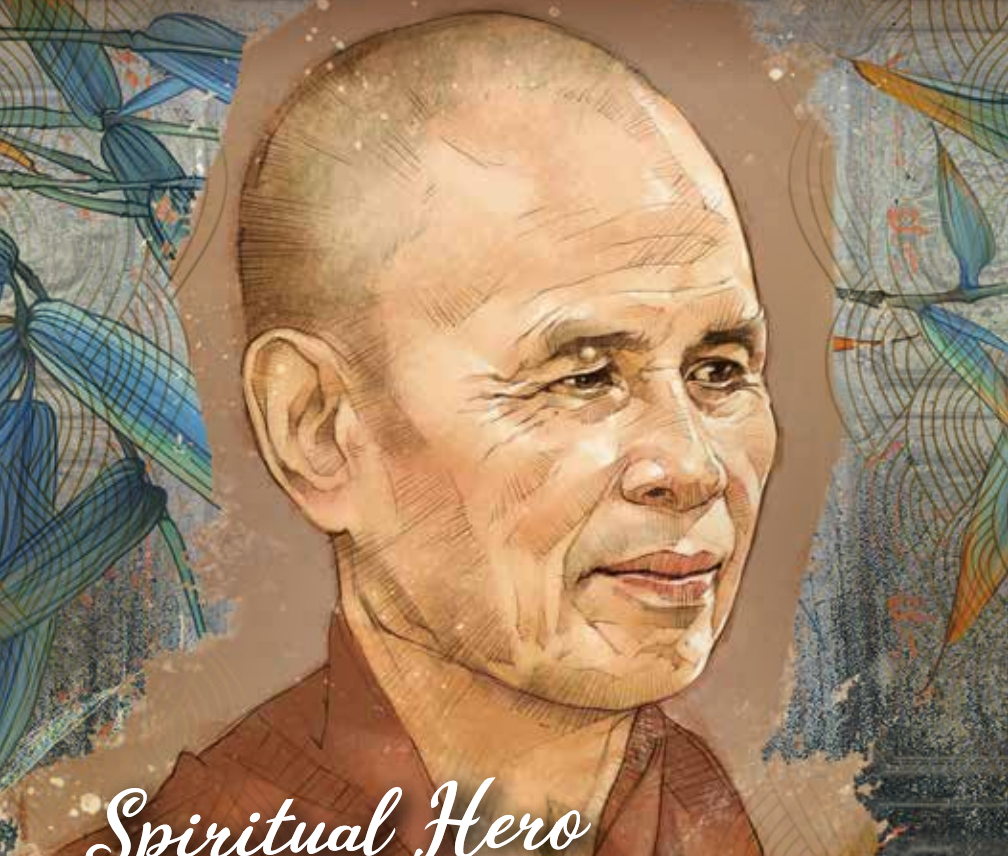


# GUIDE FOR SPIRITUAL LIVING

## SCIENCE OF MIND®



*Spiritual Hero*

# Thích Nhất Hạnh

DECEMBER 2021 VOL. 94 NO. 12

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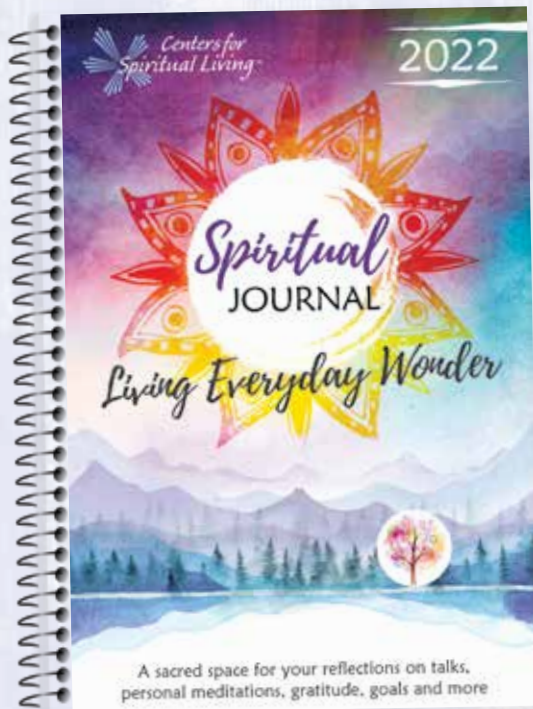


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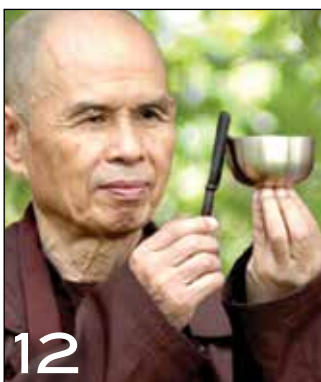
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### Journey of Becoming

YOUR SOUL'S GLORIOUS PATH SPIRALS HIGHER

#### Spiritual Hero: Thích Nhất Hạnh



*At the young age of 12, Thích Nhất Hạnh knew he wanted to ordain as a Thiền Buddhist monk. He grew up in wartime, a survivor of unimaginable destruction of life and his country. He says he still embraces his people and the whole planet in the still of the night with mindful breathing. As he humbly said on his 80th birthday in 2006, "My life is my teaching. My life is my message." He is this year's Spiritual Hero.*

Cover artwork by Sarawut Itsaranuwut / This photograph courtesy Plum Village

*Also in the December 2021 issue ...*

**THE RAINMAKER:  
MEET ELISA PEARMAIN**



**DAVID AULT  
PAGE 24**

**DAILY GUIDES: 31 DAYS  
TO HONOR YOUR JOURNEY**



**MARTHA QUINTANA  
PAGE 32**

**CONTINUED ASCENSION:  
WHO ARE YOU?**



**JEFFON SEELY  
PAGE 96**

***Did you know? 3 things about this issue***

1. Find the Buddhists' Five Mindfulness Trainings for global spirituality on page 16.
2. Join Jesse Jennings for "The Essential Ernest Holmes" in January (see page 101).
3. Rev. Karyl Huntley-Sadler has a new book out: "Celebrate With Ritual."



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**Ernest Holmes, Founder**

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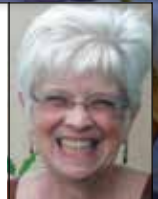
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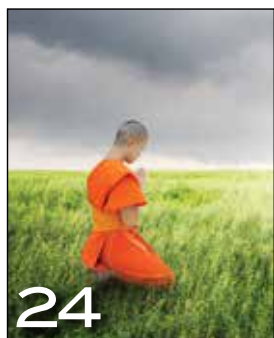
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### *Spiritual Hero 2021:* **Thích Nhất Hạnh**

He is a powerful living embodiment of peace and nonviolence who recently celebrated his 95th birthday. We honor Thích Nhất Hạnh for his lifelong dedication to planting wholesome seeds of consciousness to heal our wounded world.

JULIE MIERAU



### *The Rainmaker: An Interview* **With Elisa Pearmain**

Sit with storyteller Elisa Pearmain, a brave warrior of the ancient oral tradition. Through stories like hers, we have the chance to consume the most potent mental and emotional medicine — no one is alone.

DAVID AULT



### **The Journey of Becoming**

How are being and becoming related in an infinitely perfect universe that springs from an infinitely perfect Divine Life? If you're confused about "being with what is" and doing less while becoming more, this article is for you.

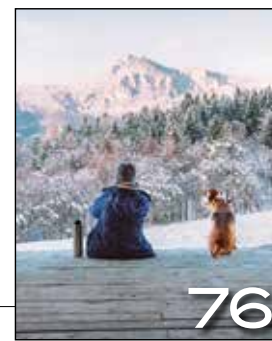
PETRA WELDES

## [ Features ]

### **New Foundations for Thinking**

When we enter into the spirit of livingness, we enter into the Spirit of God, for Creator and creation are one. When the creative power of our imagination stirs latent energy into action, there is a responding chord struck in our everyday experiences. Life surrounds us.

ERNEST HOLMES



### *Rebirth of Wonder: Winter* **Solstice Rituals of Release**

Ritual enriches us and connects us with our ancestors, our breathing family members, the generations to come, the animals, the land and our Eternal Source. Explore ways to release and give thanks.

KARYL HUNTLEY-SADLER



### **Continued Ascension**

Ask nearly any person who they are, and they'll respond with a name. This name is a collection of thoughts, memories and beliefs that give life meaning. But who are you, really? Here's a guided meditation for revealing more about your sacred path.

JEFFON SEELY





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## Journey of Becoming

**BEGINNING NOW** | Every journey begins with the first step. The first step in determining what we want to become is to go within and ask the Divine, "What is seeking to be born through me today?" Then be willing to become the instrument of that idea.

*Beginning now, I am open, receptive and available to be the place where God's highest idea of my life manifests with ease and grace.*

**WILLINGNESS** | The journey of becoming takes willingness — a willingness to release everything that may get in the way of us becoming God's greatest idea of our lives. Be willing to let go of all that keeps you from shining your light.

*I am willing to release all that no longer serves me. I am willing to become better than I was yesterday. I am willing to experience joy, love and abundance. I am willing.*

**ACCEPTANCE** | Another aspect connected to willingness is acceptance. Affirming that we are open to God's highest idea of our lives is good. Now, be willing to accept that good. You absolutely deserve it.

*I accept God's greatest good for my life. I accept who I am. I accept my abundance, my joy, my creativity. I accept me. I am the life of God.*

**CELEBRATE YOUR BECOMING** | The journey of becoming is to be a journey of celebration. We have found our way. We feel, sense and know what Spirit is becoming *in* us and *as* us. Truly, this is cause for great celebration.

*I love who I am becoming. I celebrate this becoming by being the best me I can be. I celebrate this thing called life. I rejoice in this journey of becoming. I am free. And so it is. ☸*



**EUGENE HOLDEN, RScP**, has been a student of Science of Mind for more than 30 years and a practitioner for 16. He is a spiritual life coach, speaker and writer. He served the World Ministry of Prayer for 10 years.

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## Now Is Our Destination



HOLLI  
SHARP

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

— KHALIL GIBRAN

Maybe I'm a reflection of you. Sometimes I observe shallow breathing, my heart racing, a constant stream of tasks floating through my mind. Is my value based on the number of things I check off the list and how many meetings I attend? Do I sit stagnant in my entitlement and let opportunities slip by for genuine service, recognition, compassion and conversation? Depending on the day, all this could be true. But awareness is the power to change, and living in the present moment is the antidote to squandered potential for the *real* work and growth.

What are you becoming as 2021 comes to a close? When you remove yourself from external input — the noise, the phone, the news — what answers surface? We are exactly where we're meant to be, and the path will continue to be revealed in perfect time with divine strides. My part is to slow down, be mindfully present and marvel at Source unfolding as me, as you. How dare I not admire this cosmic gift?

Our 2021 Spiritual Hero is the incomparable Thích Nhất Hạnh, a worldwide role model for living a life of service and conscious expansion. At age 95, he has blessed countless lives with his humble heart and observer's mind. Julie Mierau gives us full picture of his journey, his struggles and his devotion to global transformation.

Spend each day of December getting to know yourself better with Rev. Martha Quintana, a leader in the Science of Mind movement for decades. Her first set of Daily Guides begins on page 32.

Rev. Dr. David Ault introduces you to storyteller Elisa Pearmain. Her vulnerability about domestic violence and tale of helping others is the epitome of the Heroine's Journey. And if you're ready to fearlessly share and heal your own stories, Pearmain offers virtual platforms for connection in this interview.

Rev. Karyl Huntley-Sadler invites you into winter rituals of release, gratitude and renewal. Now hailing from the United Kingdom, she brings sacred traditions of the "Old Ways" to our hectic, modern world. Jeffon Seely offers a guided meditation on "Continued Ascension" to focus on the profound question, "Who am I?" And if you're ready to do less while becoming even more, the article by Rev. Dr. Petra Weldes is for you.

I don't need to remind you, but right *now* is the only moment we're guaranteed. Let's pay attention to it, hearts and minds wide open.

HOLLI SHARP, *Editor and Creative Director*

## Love for Raymont Anderson

Rev Dr. Raymont Anderson's Daily Guides [in the September 2021 issue] have been exquisite: full of wisdom, passion and truth-telling that have moved me deeply.

Revealing his own pain and struggle coming to terms with who he really is — the healing and subsequent liberation that enabled him to share his many gifts — inspired, encouraged and uplifted me. I'm now more determined to share my own gifts with deeper honesty, courage and love.

— HARRIET TUBMAN WRIGHT, M.S., M.A.  
*from East Bay Church of Religious Science*

Count me among the silent readers of this magazine. I have read it for years and never felt moved to write until now. I read the Daily Guides each morning prior to meditation. I love the Daily Guides, but the September 2021 Guides by Raymont Anderson touched me deeply. I will admit that at first, I was taken aback by the grittiness of his journey, but oh what beauty it revealed.

When I was able to step back from his trauma and let it teach me, minister to me, I felt as if I were able to touch the hem of Her garment. In my own ministry, I minister to people whose trauma I cannot fathom, but the residue of it informs how they engage in these teachings. If we truly value a world that works for everyone, we *must* muster the courage not to look away. I hear you; I see you; and I know how powerfully transformative this practice is.

Dr. Anderson used quotes from the writers of comics and from Ernest Holmes that we rarely see. It encourages us to stretch beyond the ordinary into the imaginal realms, to think and dream BIG. He stepped forward into the muckiness of race with grace and courage. I loved it. I am so deeply touched and appreciative of his sharing. Thank you for exposing us to this wonderful soul. Put an "S" on that man's chest. *With deep reverence,*

— REV. SANDRA BISHOP *from Cleveland, Ohio*

## Letters to the Editor

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ERNEST HOLMES

**WE BELIEVE** in God, the Living Spirit Almighty; one, indestructible, absolute and self-existent Cause. This One manifests Itself in and through all creation, but is not absorbed by Its creation. The manifest universe is the body of God; it is the logical and necessary outcome of the infinite self-knowingness of God.

**WE BELIEVE** in the individualization of the Spirit in us, and that all people are individualizations of the One Spirit.

**WE BELIEVE** in the eternality, the immortality and the continuity of the individual soul, forever and ever expanding.

**WE BELIEVE** that heaven is within us, and that we experience it to the degree that we become conscious of it.

**WE BELIEVE** the ultimate goal of life to be a complete freedom from all discord of every nature, and that this goal is sure to be attained by all.

**WE BELIEVE** in the unity of all life, and that the highest God and the innermost God is one God. We believe that God is personal to all who feel this indwelling presence.

**WE BELIEVE** in the direct revelation of truth through our intuitive and spiritual nature, and that anyone may become a revealer of truth who lives in close contact with the indwelling God.

**WE BELIEVE** that the Universal Spirit, which is God, operates through a Universal Mind, which is the Law of God; and that we are surrounded by this Creative Mind which receives the direct impress of our thought and acts upon it.

**WE BELIEVE** in the healing of the sick and control of conditions through the power of this Mind.

**WE BELIEVE** in the eternal Goodness, the eternal Loving-kindness and the eternal Givingness of Life to All.

**WE BELIEVE** in our own soul, our own spirit and our own destiny; for we understand that the life of all is God.

## Our Inheritance Is Perfection

In my childhood, when I behaved poorly, my parents disagreed as to where I picked up my bad habits. My mother would say I inherited them from my father's side of the family, and my father would say I inherited them from my mother's side. In fact, both endowed me with many fine qualities.

Even though my mother was a role model of generosity and my father was a role model of loving-kindness, I did not always live those qualities. But when I wasn't behaving as expected, the family still welcomed me and taught me how to rejoin the household.

Our spiritual selves are created by an all-powerful Creative Mind that illuminates all of creation. Our inheritance is perfection. Despite not always being excellent representatives of that legacy, we are still accepted.

The spiritual journey is about discovering the potential of our inherently perfect nature and expressing it. But we stumble and fall on this journey of becoming our true selves, because some of the experiences along the path are deeply challenging. If we don't acknowledge them for what they are and integrate them, they can follow us like shadows.

These shadows are the parts of ourselves we disown — both personally and collectively. They are the parts we may feel ashamed of or the parts we were taught to hide from others. Despite our shortcomings, the Divine accepts us and welcomes us, no matter how far we may have strayed from our true nature.

Whether you celebrate in a brightly lit garden, at the dark of midnight on the eve of winter solstice, at a Channukah, Christmas or Kwanzaa festivity, or somewhere else, take a moment in this holy season to pause and appreciate your journey.

Imagine a light in and around you that you did not create, but that shines as a permanent reminder of what lives in you — divinity. ☸



**DR. EDWARD VILJOEN** is the Spiritual Leader of Centers for Spiritual Living and the senior minister of CSL Santa Rosa in California.



By Julie Mierau

## Apostle of Peace and Nonviolence

*Meditation is to have the time to look deeply, to listen deeply. When you do that, you can get in touch with your true nature, and you release all fear and discrimination.*

— THÍCH NHẤT HẠNH

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called him “an apostle of peace and nonviolence.”

Robert Lowell called him “a real poet.”

His followers call him “Thầy,” Vietnamese for teacher, as we refer to him here.

Centers for Spiritual Living and Science of Mind magazine call him our 2021 Spiritual Hero.

On October 11, 2021, Thiền Buddhist teacher Thich Nhất Hạnh celebrated his 95th birthday. During his 79 years as a Buddhist monk, Thầy has grounded the world in Buddhist principles, uplifted the forlorn, eased those who suffered and never forgot the lessons of his youth.

In his book “The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching,” he wrote, “I grew up in a time of war. There was destruction all around — children, adults, values, a whole country. As a young person, I suffered a lot. ... The wounds of war in me are still not all healed. There are nights I lie awake and embrace my people, my country and the whole planet with my mindful breathing.”

As he said on the occasion of his 80th birthday, “Teaching is not done by talking alone. It is done by how you live your life. My life is my teaching. My life is my message.”



*Born Nguyễn Xuân Bảo in the ancient imperial capital of Huế, Vietnam, he knew he wanted to ordain as a monk at age 12.*

*Spiritual Hero*  
**Thích Nhất Hạnh**

## *Living in Service*

Born in central Vietnam in 1926, Thầy entered Tu Hieu Temple as a novice monk when he was 16. As a young monk in the early 1950s, he joined the movement to renew Vietnamese Buddhism.

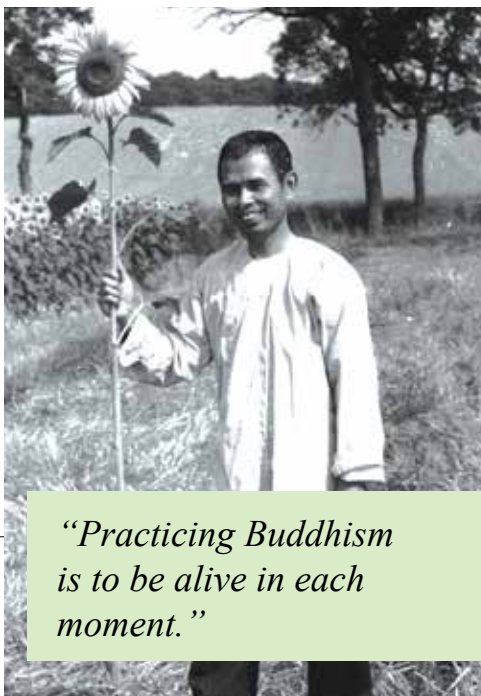
When war came to Vietnam, monks and nuns faced a choice: Adhere to the contemplative life of meditating in the monasteries, or help those around them suffering under the turmoil of war. Thầy chose to do both.

He founded the Engaged Buddhism movement, coining the term in his book "Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire." Also known as socially engaged Buddhism, the movement emerged in Asia in the 20th century, bringing together Buddhists whose desire was to apply Buddhist ethics, insights and the teaching of the Buddhist dharma to situations of injustice and suffering caused by social, political and economic policies.

In 1961, Thầy traveled to the United States to teach comparative religion at Princeton University. A year later he taught and researched Buddhism at Columbia University. He then went back to Vietnam and founded the School of Youth for Social Service, a grassroots relief organization of 10,000 volunteers based on the Buddhist principles of nonviolence and compassionate action. He also founded the Van Hanh Buddhist University in Saigon. In 1966, he established the Order of Interbeing, based on traditional Bodhisattva Precepts. (Continued on page 16.)

*As a young monk in the 1950s, Thầy joined the movement to renew Vietnamese Buddhism. He traveled to the United States in 1961 to teach at Princeton University.*

Photograph courtesy Plum Village



*"Practicing Buddhism is to be alive in each moment."*

## *The Five Mindfulness Trainings*

The Five Mindfulness Trainings comprise the Buddhist vision for a global spirituality and ethic. *If we live according to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we are already on the path of a bodhisattva. Knowing we are on that path, we are not lost in confusion about our life in the present or in fears about the future.*

### **REVERENCE FOR LIFE**

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. ... I will cultivate openness, nondiscrimination and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism and dogmatism in myself and in the world.

### **TRUE HAPPINESS**

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking and acting. ... I am committed to practicing Right Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and stop contributing to climate change.

### **TRUE LOVE**

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. ... Seeing that body and mind are one, I am committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and cultivating loving kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness — which are the four basic elements of true love.

### **LOVING SPEECH AND DEEP LISTENING**

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations.

### **NOURISHMENT AND HEALING**

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming.



## *Standing Against War*

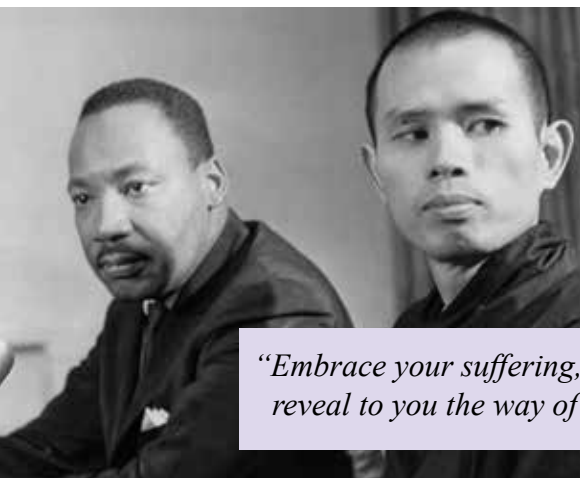
In 1966, Thầy traveled again to the United States and to Europe, arguing the case for peace and to end hostilities in Vietnam. During this trip, he met with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. North and South Vietnam denied him the right to return to his beloved home, beginning an exile that lasted 39 years.

He wrote about this experience in his book “At Home in the World,” recounting being informed by a reporter of “a dispatch from Saigon, asking the governments of the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Japan to no longer honor my passport because they felt I had been saying things opposing their efforts in the war against Communism. The governments complied, and my passport was invalidated.”

Although friends urged him to go into hiding, staying in the United States meant risking deportation and jail. Instead, he sought and was granted asylum by the French government.

In 1968, Thầy represented the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation at the Paris peace talks. “Our mission,” he wrote, “was to speak out against the war on behalf of the mass of Vietnamese people whose voices were not being heard.”

*Photographs courtesy Plum Village*



*“Embrace your suffering, and let it reveal to you the way of peace.”*



He admits his first two years of exile were “quite difficult.” He had not yet found his true home.

With the help of U.S. Senators George McGovern and Robert F. Kennedy, Thầy obtained a visa to engage on a speaking tour, offering information to Americans about the situation in Vietnam that was not being told through the media.

He wrote that it was thanks to his mindfulness practice that he survived during this time. “The practice,” he said, “brought me back to my true home in the here and now. Eventually I stopped suffering.

“It was because I didn’t belong to any particular country that I had to make an effort to break through and find my true home. The feeling that we are not accepted, that we do not belong anywhere and have no national identity can provoke the breakthrough necessary for us to find our true home.”

## *Creating a Village*

In 1975, Thầy founded the Sweet Potato community near Paris, which moved to a larger site in 1982 and became known as Plum Village. Under his spiritual leadership, Plum Village has become the West’s largest and most active Buddhist monastery. More than 200 resident monastics and upward of 8,000 annual visitors come to Plum Village to learn the art of mindful living.

Since its inception, Plum Village has drawn more than 100,000 retreat participants, each making a commitment to follow Thầy’s modernized code of universal global ethics, known as the Five Mindfulness Trainings:

1. Reverence for life
2. True happiness
3. True love
4. Loving speech and deep listening
5. Nourishment and healing

*“With understanding and compassion, you will be able to heal the wounds in your heart and the wounds in the world.”*

Plum Village, as described on its website, is where Thầy has built a “beloved community” — a community in a healthy, nourishing environment “where people can learn the art of living in harmony with one another and with the Earth.”



# Spiritual Hero Thich Nhất Hạnh

Plum Village, whether offering in-person retreats or online versions due to COVID-19, is a place where adherents weave mindfulness into daily activities. Following Buddhist principles and tradition, participants enjoy periods of silence, meditation, mindful work and play.

## *Coming Home*

At age 92, suffering the effects of a major stroke four years prior that left him partially paralyzed and unable to speak, Thầy quietly returned home to Huế in central Vietnam. Here he plans to live out his days at the monastery where he became a novice monk.

In "At Home in the World" he writes, "Each of us needs a reserve of memories and experiences that are beautiful, healthy and strong enough to help us during difficult moments. ...

"Every positive experience we live deeply, in full awareness, is like a wholesome seed planted in our consciousness. We need to practice mindfulness all the time so we can plant healing, positive seeds in ourselves.

"Then, when we need them, they will be able to take care of us."

Over the course of an extraordinary life, Thầy has taught hundreds of thousands of people how to bring mindfulness into their lives. At the close of "At Home in the World," he writes, "There's no beginning and no end. I will never die. There will be a dissolution of this body, but that does not mean my death. I will continue, always."

In celebration of that continuance, we name Thich Nhất Hạnh our 2021 Spiritual Hero. ☸

*Photographs courtesy Plum Village*



## World Healing Peace Meditation

Friday, December 31, 2021, at Noon GMT

Join Centers for Spiritual Living Global Heart of Peace  
as we commemorate John Randolph Price's  
World Healing Peace Meditation on Facebook Live

Centers for Spiritual Living Facebook Page



*Global Heart of Peace*



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*For more than three decades, Jesse Jennings has shared his practical spiritual wisdom in the pages of this magazine. He conveys powerful Science of Mind principles in a way that meets readers' needs and wants through rapidly changing times.*

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## Trusting Truth

*Never let anything cause you to doubt your ability to demonstrate the Truth. Conceive of your word as being the Thing.*

— ERNEST HOLMES



**REV. ANDRIETTE EARL** is the founding spiritual leader of Heart and Soul Center of Light in Oakland, California.

My initial focus on my journey of becoming was to manifest more stuff, believing that would make my life complete. I had no clue that my true heart's desire was to demonstrate a deeper self-love. Who knew that a material wish list would morph into my clear intention to unconditionally love, fully accept and forgive myself? I had so much to learn.

One of the first lessons was to trust Divine Source, believe my worthiness, know I am loved and declare this truth with certainty. This was radical thinking at the time. I began to fashion affirmations declaring my highest and best. I recited these affirmations to develop and nurture my budding ideas into an empowering belief system.

My timing was spot-on. This spiritual practice of trusting and affirming my divine good brought me out of deep depression — initially brightening my day, eventually my weeks and ultimately my life. I learned to believe in my divinity, write statements affirming my best life and daily declare this truth with enthusiasm and conviction.

That was 40 years ago, and my journey of becoming continues. As we bring 2021 to closure, I acknowledge the extreme challenges this year wrought — challenges evident in global events, the multi-pandemics of the past two years and our responses to them.

Our world is on a journey of becoming and so are we. I believe this journey is guiding us into greater awareness of who and how we are and can be, especially with and for each other. We are being drawn into an even higher vibration of love, grace and connection. Whatever has happened or is happening now, truth is our navigator. We are here to trust the truth and make a difference.

Our intentional word is powerful. There is truth for us to demonstrate. Please join me in affirming this: "I engage Divine Mind and realize the best way and means to call forth Divine Love so that harmony, peace, cooperation, unity and mutual helpfulness is experienced by all." ❧



# Personal Leadership Enrichment

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## The Detective Leader: Tools for Wisdom

It's that time of year again when Louise Penny publishes the next Inspector Gamache novel. If you're already a fan, you'll be familiar with Gamache's advice he shares with each of his new detectives, four statements that guide a life well lived and build discernment, courage and clarity: *I don't know. I need help. I'm sorry. I was wrong.*

Every time I read these words, I take a deeper breath. I always seem to need at least one of them in my leadership that day. There's a lot of freedom in these four simple phrases — four practices that can transform a mystery into a manageable puzzle.

As an entrepreneur and an educator, I seem to always be on the front line, doing my best and learning as I go. I confess, I enjoy the challenges almost as much as I relish the discoveries. Sometimes, I seem to know exactly what needs to be done. More often, the unexpected rises up to meet me, and I need to improvise. *I don't know.*

When my improvisation leads me to more uncertainty, it's simply not good leadership practice to fall back on past knowledge.

More and more, what I used to count as certainty isn't helpful as I face the complexities of strong relationships with strong people and the realities of a world that seems to love crisis more than peace. Inevitably, *I need help.*

And just as inevitably, I make mistakes. Great leadership is learning leadership, right? And some of my most important missteps happen in my relationships because learning in community is a leader's greatest source of innovation, collaboration and insight. When a mistake affects someone else, I have to have the courage to say *I'm sorry.*

Usually, *I was wrong* makes an apology authentic and real or puts me back on track when I've gone down a blind alley. As Gamache (and every leadership detective) understands, learning isn't only about knowing what's right: It's about doing what's right and being present enough to speak the truth simply as we go. ☸



**CAROL BURBANK, Ph.D.,** is a leadership and change specialist as well as the president of Storyweaving Coaching and Consulting. Read more on her blog, [Lead Me On, at ChooseTheBetterStory.com](http://LeadMeOn.atChooseTheBetterStory.com).



# The Rainmaker

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
STORYTELLER  
ELISA PEARMAIN

*Photo by FW Studio*

Could it be that history is nothing but a series of stories? From them we learn emulation. Told consciously, every story, folktale, fable or chronicle provides ongoing generations with road maps on how to nurture a personal relationship with empathy and compassion.

From stories, we cultivate awareness of the power of a causal choice and begin an understanding of the effects of such choices. Through this ancient oral tradition, we have the chance to consume the most potent of mental and emotional medicine — that no one is alone.

Elisa Pearmain's personal, once-upon-a-time story contains the painful experience of domestic violence. In her early 20s, her love relationship took a fearful and abusive turn, leaving her feeling the weight of an unbearable shame.

Even after getting away, she continued to silence her feelings until attending a woman's dance/theater workshop where she began reclaiming her voice and reshaping her life's work. Today, she is an award-winning author, psychotherapist and master storyteller who has devoted her life to helping others heal.

I spoke with her about her healing journey.

**David Ault:** You write on your website that storytelling is the oldest educational and therapeutic tool on Earth. How did storytelling motivate you to offer this tradition to others after such a personally painful experience?

**Elisa Pearmain:** After witnessing other women sharing their stories of wounding and empowerment during that workshop, I found the courage to begin to shape and share my own.

Stepping back into the shoes of the one who had to tiptoe around my old boyfriend, and finding the voice of the one who could not express her feelings out of fear — it brought me great empathy for the young woman who had gone through that experience. In my process of shaping the story, anger came, and then tears, and then forgiveness and a love for the storyteller, and thus the end of shame.

A group of women and I shared our stories for battered women's shelters. The way that the audience responded showed me that telling my story gave them permission to tell theirs.



*Elisa  
Pearmain*

I saw the power of both shaping and telling the story for healing, forgiving myself — and ultimately the boyfriend — and for liberating others from their own shame and powerlessness.

Somewhere early on in my performing of the story, someone told me I was a storyteller, and there was a whole storytelling revival happening. I moved to Boston, took classes and was off on a journey that continues today, 38 years later.

**DA:** You've developed a rich and varied path as a storyteller, offering it as a therapeutic tool in your therapy practice and through workshops and programs in schools and religious institutions. Some of your main themes have included bullying and forgiveness. What impact have you witnessed as a result of your work?

**EP:** I receive letters from kids after I do programs in schools saying things like, "I'll never look at someone who looks different from me the same way again." I feel like stories and folktales are a bridge to the awareness of shared experience — what happened to me has happened to another, whether it's the one bullied, the one who bullies or the bystander.

This prompts a healthy examination of our feelings: *What did that feel like?* We learn to observe our responses to these stories, which sets the tone for our relationship with vulnerability and emotional honesty. A child can become freshly empowered by cultivating their own decision to not continue participating in harmful behavior.

**DA:** You observe empathy becoming real to them just as it became real for you? Do you feel conscious storytelling is a direct portal to empathy?

**EP:** Yes, because the story allows you to walk in the shoes of another. Your heart can open. You may become less guarded and learn to identify with someone who's been through a challenge. I believe that's the way the brain naturally connects.

We say, "Oh yes, I know what that is. I can imagine what that is." It is empathy and freedom from isolation. You framed it as "good medicine." That's what [writer and Jungian psychoanalyst] Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés talked about. It's like an antibiotic. You hear a story, and it goes to where it's needed. You know how a person receives a story is nuanced. It's not merely one size fits all.

It will be different based on their life experience, so I veer away from sayings like, "The moral of that story is ... ." You leave it open and try to allow the one listening to create their own bridge.

**DA:** As someone so deeply involved in the curation of story, what, if any, is your favorite?

**EP:** The story of Indra's Net. To keep it simple, Indra, the Hindu Lord of the heavens, invites Buddha to his heavenly palace. Wanting to impress his guest, he orders thousands of diamonds to be brought in and strung on each knot of a giant net that covers the walls and ceilings of the palace.

When Buddha arrives, he steps into the great room, he gasps and he dances to the middle of the room with awe. He exclaims to Indra how perfectly his net captures the nature of reality. Every gem reflects the same light. Even when you move a gem, the movement is reflected in all the others. And so it is with us — every action we take is reflected throughout all humanity. Every action makes a difference.

Indra was so moved that he began to cry great tears, and he said, "This web is too important. It's not meant solely for my eyes, but it is for everyone. All must know this."

He then pulled it down from the ceiling and the walls, and he took it out to his balcony and flung it mightily into the sky. And today, the stars, or Indra's Net, remind us we're all connected. Every action has a ripple effect. And the telling of that story might remind others of our innate connection.

**DA:** In reflecting on your own spiritual journey, who have been your greatest influences?

**EP:** It goes back to Ram Dass. I have always loved nature, and as a young woman, I often found the need to go into forest, be in the stillness, to camp. I'd bring his book "Be Here Now" with me, and it provided great inspiration. It was and is incredibly profound.

When it comes to forgiveness, I think warmly of the example set by my parents. All families have their dynamics — the members who

*Their living story was "love comes first."*

remain rigid and unbending in their views or grudges — but my parents did a lot of forgiving of extended family.

They lived the story of forgiveness out loud. They embodied the principles of their Unitarian Universalist faith and worked actively for social justice issues. Their living story was “love comes first.” They never searched for exceptions to that. They were always saying, “This is what we do.” I went on to also appreciate the writings/teachings of Wayne Dyer, Marianne Williamson and many others.

**DA:** Connection is at the forefront of all conscious conversation as we continue to traverse the uncertainty of our shared global uncertainty. How have you nurtured connection during the pandemic?

**EP:** I am on the board of a group called the Healing Story Alliance, which has been doing great things for more than 20 years. Since the pandemic, we’ve started a new program using Zoom called “Keeping Our Oars in the Water,” which is a metaphor for offering service even in the midst of a storm.

We meet regularly, and it is open and free to the community. We have hosts who offer a theme, and from there we offer breakout sessions that prompt rich discussion. It’s proven to be the most wonderful opportunity for anyone, even if they’d like to simply log on and listen. You don’t have to speak. It’s just a consistent positive and welcoming energy.

I’m also part of a monthly concert series called “Kind Stories in Concert” that allows people to share stories on kindness, especially through the years of our expanding political division. Kindness is the rule, and this series has allowed folks to feel the contagiousness of the results of kindness and its invaluable healing.

**DA:** And when you think about the volume of stories you have been exposed to and read, what is a recent one that has captured your attention?

**EP:** At a recent presentation, I felt led to share the Taoists’ story of the Rainmaker, a short story about a village in China where no rain had fallen for a very long time. The monks had tried everything. The locals had performed every ritual to invoke the rain, yet nothing had proven effective.

Finally, they agreed to summon an old Taoist priest known as the Rainmaker to come and visit their village. He arrived, looked around, then made a modest request — all he needed was a quiet house to stay in, a small garden to tend and to be given total solitude. And so the villagers honored his request and left him alone. On the fourth day, the rain began to fall. Excited, the people of the village ran over to the Rainmaker to thank him for what he had done. “I’ve done nothing,” he said.

“Of course you have,” they insisted. “After four days, the long-awaited rains have come.”

“Again,” he said, “I did nothing. Before I came, I was aligned and in order within myself. Upon arriving, I became infected by the disorder that permeates this village. Those days of requested solitude — the days of tending to the garden — were needed for me to restore my own inner garden of order. When I was able to do so, then the rain began to fall. I did not make the rain happen. I only took responsibility for myself.”

It’s such an important metaphor for what the world is like today. We can become so easily infected by our mental, collective environment, so quick to mock and point fingers: “If only this wasn’t this way ...” We’re in a state of drought. Peace is tenuous. We’re holding grudges. So many are angry. If we remain this way, we ultimately contribute to a perpetual drought.

So, to me, the story is a perfect reminder of the possibility and power of the meditative call to tend to our inner world, to calm the noise, to bring forgiveness to the grudges, the vitriol, the division. We then create a hospitable place for peace to rain upon us. ☸



### Stories Are Doorways

*In her own right, Elisa Pearmain is a rainmaker, using the power of story to bring us back to a quieter state of remembrance and recognition. In addition to sharing her gifts in schools and religious institutions, she is a licensed psychotherapist with a focus on healing story work, forgiveness and mindfulness practice, and an award-winning author of two collections of wisdom tales. Learn more about Pearmain at [WisdomTales.com](http://WisdomTales.com).*



## Principle Awaits Our Awareness



**REV. DR. JESSE JENNINGS**

is senior minister of the Creative Life Spiritual Center in Houston.

For deeper discussion, visit [CreativeLife.org/SundayTalks](http://CreativeLife.org/SundayTalks).

For immediate prayer support, please contact World Ministry of Prayer at [CSL.org](http://CSL.org).

**Q**

**Please say more about regular spiritual practice.**

**A**

The New Thought teaching announces all sorts of wonderful things: that we are each beloved of the universe; that we can manifest our heartfelt desires; and that peace, joy and well-being are everyone's entitlement. However, most of us have to put in some work, not to make these things come true but to accept them fully — because we have believed otherwise and have therefore manifested otherwise, since it is done to us more or less as we believe.

I heard it said, "The only thing God judges you on is your self-image." That is, the only thing spiritual law has to work with by way of personal responsiveness to you is the degree of worthiness you grant yourself.

This is why we engage in spiritual practice. It consists of time set aside for meditation, affirmative prayer, reading and ritual by which you remind yourself that we are spiritual beings and everything we encounter in this world is spiritual in nature.

Spirituality is the common denominator and, again, is not achieved or earned. We just learn to recognize it, especially where it may not appear to be flourishing, such as in chaotic change and

conflict. Spiritual practice reminds us that all forms "strut and fret their hour upon the stage," while principle serenely awaits our conscious awareness and direction.

Practically, spiritual practice is like any other kind of practice. We practice things to get better at them. Anyone can play a piano, you know? Just sit down at the thing and bang randomly on the keys, and you are technically making music, just not music you or anyone else wants to hear. For that, you need practice, running through scales and chords, even when you'd rather do something else.

Your vision of making enjoyable music is what brings you back to the keyboard, repeating what you know and then going a little further each time. Spiritual practice builds on itself until we can hold the whole world in our hearts.

## Nobody Owns Christmas

**Q**

**How can I, a post-Christian metaphysician, not feel like a hypocrite while celebrating Christmas?**

**A**

First, realize that hypocrisy is not a feeling. Shame is a feeling. Joy is a feeling. Hypocrisy is a judgment. It's the pretense of appearing to believe something while actually doing its opposite, and it is seen as a betrayal of one's own standards.

Before piling more judgment on yourself, realize that nobody owns Christmas or your experience of it. To me, the only hypocrisy would be for you to say that only you fully understand and can appreciate the holiday, and all the current Christians are deluded in however they're celebrating it. I don't hear you saying this, and can't imagine that you would, otherwise you'd never think to critique yourself the way you are.

As to Christian Christmases, these are not monolithic. Some Christian churches have pipe organs and whole orchestras; some forbid instrumental music altogether. Some are adorned with trimmed trees and festive garlands, while others consider these remnants of heathen times. Some Christians are permitted to consume all the alcohol they can safely hold, but some are told not to touch it.

Each sect and denomination will cite some biblical passage or traditional precedent for their rules. I do not believe my organization and my center do Christmas the right way. No, we do it *our* way, for there is no one right way for everybody, nor are we more virtuous than anybody else for taking this position.

Christmas is about the birth of the Christ child — whether actually, metaphorically or both is up to you to decide. Meanwhile, it's also about family, nostalgia, special food, faith, hope, charity, awe, astonishment, giving and receiving, music, stories, two planetary solstices and recognizing the circle of humankind and of all life.

Jean Houston writes of "a breach in ordinary time" through which "the possible human is revealed." Christmas is about something beyond. How not to feel like a hypocrite? Brush off any outward scolding or inward cringing and go have the time of your life. ❧

*Experience the holiday season in ways that bring you joy.*

# DAILY GUIDES

DECEMBER 2021 BY MARTHA QUINTANA

The ache for HOME  
lives in all of us ...

... the safe place where we can go  
as we are and not be questioned.

— MAYA ANGELOU

Photo by Matic Stojš Lomovsek



REV. MARTHA QUINTANA

This month's theme, "The Journey of Becoming," along with the December holiday celebrations were my inspiration in writing these Daily Guides. I found myself thinking of the indomitable nature of the Spirit and the inherent holiday celebration of it. Essentially, because there is a part of me that cannot be and is never touched, I am free to grow, to heal no matter what has happened to me. From Hanukkah to the winter solstice, from Christmas to Kwanzaa and New Year's Eve, there is a celebration of light so bright that each of us can choose to be lifted out of the shadow of our collective and individual souls. We are each free to become.

**Rev. Martha Quintana** has dedicated her life to the transformation of others' lives through inclusivity, respect and opportunities to create unity. Whether serving at the Centers for Spiritual Living home office, in the community or with her former congregation, she embraces the power of Science of Mind to usher others into new expressions of conscious thinking. She has been invited to speak at conferences and events, most recently in the areas of spirituality and social/environmental justice, as well as spiritually motivated moral leadership.

Quintana lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and serves as the Global Services manager for Centers for Spiritual Living. She served for 11 years as the founding senior minister of the Rio Grande Center for Spiritual Living in Albuquerque. Some of her other CSL work includes serving on the Spiritually Motivated Social Engaged Committee, the CSL Diversity Equity Inclusion Committee, the CSL Awards Committee and most recently on the Practitioner Standards and Global Services Committees.

## Made of Something Bigger

*The One is the immeasurable light, pure, holy, immaculate. It is unutterable and is perfect in incorruptibility. Not that it is just perfection or blessedness or divinity: It is much greater.*

— “The Secret Book of John,” page 107

*Mind — the Thing, Spirit, Causation — is beyond and yet not beyond our grasp. ... We shall never encompass God, and yet we shall always be in God and of God.*

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” page 28

The start of December means the holiday season is now in full swing. We’ve just celebrated Thanksgiving and now the fun begins. There’s a difference between “fun” — the one on all the commercials — and actual fun. “Fun” feels empty and comes when I focus on the trappings of the holidays. Actual fun is when I celebrate with the joy of the Divine. This is a true celebration; it celebrates the something bigger from which I’m made.

I experienced the distinction between these two types of fun some years ago when I woke up on Thanksgiving morning. Earlier in the year, my husband, mother and mother-in-law all had close brushes with death. I awoke that day with the thought that if any of them had passed away, I would have given anything to have one more dinner with them. Then I had this thought. I did get to make dinner for them because they were still with me. I literally sprang from my bed filled with joy.

The drudgery I felt making Thanksgiving dinner in the past was gone. I could have a celebration for and with my family. That year, in addition to my husband, mother and mother-in-law, my brothers, their families and their in-laws came over.

I was filled with such happiness, it infected everyone — and we had the best time. The joy of love was present, and it started with the honor of making dinner for my beloveds. I experienced that something bigger, and I was grateful.

### AFFIRMATION

On this day, a day filled with grace and gladness, I dwell on all things good.

## Life Withholds Nothing From Me

*I said to him, “So now, Lord, does a person who sees a vision see it with the soul or with the spirit?” The savior answered, “A person does not see with the soul or with the spirit. Rather, the mind, which exists between these two, sees the vision.”*

— “The Gospel of Mary,” page 743

*Therefore, our belief sets the limit to our demonstration of a Principle which, of Itself, is without limit. It is ready to fill everything, because It is Infinite. So, it is not a question of Its willingness, nor of Its ability. It is entirely a question of our own receptivity.*

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” page 37

Life withholds nothing from me, even when I can’t accept it. I am as precious to life as anyone or anything else. Yet there are times I don’t let myself believe it. There is an infinite world, and I am an infinite being, so why then do I forget and put limits on my life?

Many years ago, when my daughter was an infant, I found myself a single mom. I knew I needed a home, and in meditation, I heard that inner-voice-that-knows-everything say, “Go buy a house.” I laughed. I needed money to buy a house, and I didn’t have enough savings for a down payment. However, I knew better than to ignore that voice. I went house hunting with a friend of mine who was a realtor. I told her my dilemma of no savings, and she cheerfully said, “Let’s look anyway.” I thought maybe I’d find a rent-to-own place.

Finally we found it — the perfect house. It was the right price, and I could afford the monthly payments. I just didn’t have the down payment. My friend said she could see us living in that house, and then she turned to me and said she would lend me the money for the down payment. I had a new home. The mortgage loan went through in a day, and I found myself living in the house a short two weeks later. We moved in on Christmas Eve. I discovered, indeed, the world withholds nothing.

### AFFIRMATION

Today, I know the world withholds nothing from me. I accept this and my vision meets the Infinite to meet my need.



# Science of Mind: A Way Home

FRIDAY DECEMBER 3, 2021

*Some balance, dear, some delicate discernment is required between what appears to be and / what really is not. / Let it often come down to this, for the right equation you need to solve the big dilemma is just too vast for most. / Yes, let it come down to this, when thoughts and aspects of the infinite can no longer delight you: / Pray to your hand that it reveals all the wonder you will ever need to be satisfied. For it is there. The divine mystery is in all things.*

— Daniel Ladinsky, “A Year With Hafiz,” page 185

*The study of the Science of Mind is a study of First Cause, Spirit, Mind or that invisible Essence, that ultimate Stuff and Intelligence from which everything comes, the Power back of creation — the Thing Itself.*

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” page 26

For years, as a young woman in my 20s, I felt abandoned by God. I was miserable and alone, and life didn’t seem worth it. I declared atheism, railed angrily at the world, participated in labor strikes, and demanded equality and justice for all. At the same time, I found myself longing for the aspects of life other people seemed to have: happiness, relationships and the ability to be interested in everything around them. I wanted this but couldn’t seem to find my way to it.

Eventually, I had a chance encounter that brought me to Science of Mind. Once I discovered there is a personal Spirit animating my body that can then be found in *all the other bodies*, I had license to experience love in my own life. Over time and with practice, the divine Spirit within led me to inner peace, happiness and the ability to work for social justice from my corner of the world.

Science of Mind gave me a way to come home again.

## AFFIRMATION

The Spirit that animates my body provides my path to come home.

# Holding Another in My Heart

SATURDAY DECEMBER 4, 2021

*Looking back at our journey so far, we can discern a definite pattern, a golden thread of divine synchronicity weaving through the tapestry of our lives. It has manifested in the many invitations and opportunities that have come our way and to which, fortunately, we said “Yes,” even though they might have stretched our boundaries and propelled us out of our comfort zone into a whole new world of possibilities. “Change is inevitable,” says Dr. Harry Morgan Moses, “but growth is optional.”* — David J. Serlin, “Power for Good,” page 199

*Treatment is for the purpose of inducing an interior awareness — an inner realization — in the mind of the practitioner, pertaining to the spiritual perfection of the person for whom he is working.*

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” pages 183-184

There is nothing happening when I don’t focus my awareness on it. Right? Well, not really.

My awareness and what’s happening with other people sometimes meet and give me insight and then, more often than not, go their separate ways. I bring this up because there are times people are going through things of which I am wholly unaware.

When the person meets me or comes to my attention, I am not in a place to judge because the circumstances of their life have not come to my awareness often until the moment I meet them, even if I’ve known them all my life.

I’m in no place to judge. My awareness is lacking. Yet, I can get to know them because they are imbued with the same Spirit as me and are human, like me.

## AFFIRMATION

Holding another in my heart requires love, not judgment.

## Being a Witness to Someone's Story

*We were attracted by [Science of Mind's] open-minded, non-dogmatic approach that empowers the individual to take responsibility for their own life. From the springboard of spiritualism we were discovering a philosophy that fitted us like a glove and reflected an even wider outlook on God, life and the power of thought. We were eager to find out more.*

— David J. Serlin, "The Power for Good," page 53

*It is impossible to divorce spiritual understanding from the proper use of mental law. The Spirit within man is God, and only to the degree that we listen to and seek to obey this Spirit shall we really succeed.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 275

One of the many aspects of Science of Mind that attracted me was that I could bring *all of me* into the philosophy. This was, and is, a great gift. In the past, when I had been part of other spiritual traditions, I found I wasn't able to share what I really thought because there was usually some dogma that made me wrong. Since I didn't want to be wrong or stir controversy, I was quiet. I kept what I really thought to myself. With Science of Mind, I found that people listened to and welcomed my story. I found myself openly expressing thoughts I had held inside for so long. I was healed by telling my story and sharing the thoughts of my authentic self. With this healing, I came to listen deeply to others.

I found I love stories, whether another person is telling me about their life or I'm reading about someone else's life. I get to live another lifetime through another person's eyes. I can hike a trail with them, swim the ocean with them or live through something so unforgettable that I'm left breathless. Stories are also important because they allow the storyteller and me to be woven into each other's life: "I told Martha that story once." Now, I've become part of their story, too. By listening, the person and I become the victors of their story. I was the witness just like so many witnessed me. That's love given back.

### AFFIRMATION

Listening to someone's story is love.

## The Garden of Perception

*The Prayer of the Turtle: O God, let me be free of this weighty shell upon my back. / When I'm swimming freely in the cool dark water/ It is a great discomfort to be weighed down / By this, this piece of bone. / But if I didn't have a shell ... / I wouldn't be a turtle! Amen.*

— Lois Smith (age 13), "Favourite Prayers,"  
compiled by Deborah Cassidi, page 113

*We should not separate Life from living, Spirit from matter nor Divine Principle from a Universal Creation. God is "All is all." That is, God IS, and is in everything. The gardener finds a divine idea concealed in the seed.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 103

When I was a little girl, I used to spend summers with my amazing grandmother who gardened as a hobby. Her hobby garden spanned two acres, and I had to weed that garden, which contained a seemingly endless number of weeds. I thought it was a lot — too much. My grandmother assured me it wasn't because the gardens of her childhood spanned 26 acres. I thanked my lucky stars I didn't have to weed *that* garden. I never would have been able to leave and go play.

As I grew older, I began to realize that everything is perception. Perception is a seed of my thought. Compared to today's raised garden beds and urban plots of land, my two acres of weeding was endless.

My family ate the vegetables from the two-acre garden, and my mother canned a lot of the produce and fruit for the winter. For my grandmother, however, in the absence of supermarkets in her rural community, her family depended on their 26 acres of gardens for life.

It's all a matter of perception, our intentions and the size and use of our gardens.

### AFFIRMATION

Life provides for me, just as I am, what I need — big and small.



## Growing Freedom in the Self

*Is freedom anything else but to live the life that we wish?  
Nothing else.*

— Epictetus

*The Divine Plan is one of freedom; bondage is not God-ordained. Freedom is the birthright of every living soul. All instinctively feel this. The Truth points to freedom, under Law. Thus the inherent nature of man is forever seeking to express itself in terms of freedom. We do well to listen to this Inner Voice, for it tells us of a life wonderful in its scope, of a love beyond our fondest dreams, of a freedom which the soul craves.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," pages 25-26

There's freedom, and then there's true *freedom*. When I was younger, I always thought of freedom as the ability to do whatever I wanted whenever I wanted. This idea of freedom took me to parts of myself that couldn't accomplish the highest notion of the hardest working me I could conceive. I had big ideas of having big things and doing big things. This made me anxious.

My younger version of freedom was exhausting. For many years, I worked long hours and gave myself away simply because I was free to do so.

The "more mature" version of freedom has now taken me to becoming the best version of myself. This means that I am able to be authentically me in ways that give rise to peace. I am free to be a blessing to everyone around me.

I find that as I settle into this mature type of freedom, I'm better able to live the life I have been given and, even more importantly, that I have crafted. I am happy to be me. This is true freedom.

### AFFIRMATION

Today, I am free to be me in joy.

## The Antidote to Overthinking

*The vision of the Divine is clear in my mind / And I leave all concerns and worries far behind.*

— Jac Blackman, "Daily Rhyming Inspirations," page 71

*A treatment is an active thing. When one gives a treatment, he is not sitting around, hoping that something may happen. He is definitely, constructively, actively stating, sensing, knowing some specific good.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 47

Left to my own devices, I'm uncertain about too much. It's like the old adage that anything worth thinking is worth overthinking. It's this overthinking that creates second-guessing and doubt. When I get into doubt, the kind that sends me crashing into the unreal, bound-up world of too much expectation, I become paralyzed.

The good news is, as I've become more reliant on my spiritual practice of prayer and meditation, I'm spending less time in doubt and more time in free-to-be-me space. The free-to-be-me space allows me to breathe deeply and notice what's going on around me.

This can be anything from the beautiful, translucent light streaming through the house to the realization that I have to take the car in for an alignment. The point is that the doubt and expectation that cause paralysis take too much away from my life and, today, I'm free to be me and notice the day.

### AFFIRMATION

I'm free to be me and notice the day.

## The Voice of Peace

*When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.*

— Jimi Hendrix

*This Original Life is Infinite. It is good. It is filled with peace. It is of the essence of purity. It is the ultimate of intelligence. It is power. It is Law. It is Life. It is in us.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 36

Peace — everybody wants it and few can agree on it. It's difficult to agree on a process, and peace is a process rather than a thing. Likewise, life is a process rather than a thing, so the question becomes how to translate the process of peace into the conditions of life.

Peace is an inside process that brings thoughts of safety, happiness and fulfillment, while life's process brings the cacophony of existence to the fore. You can see the conundrum. As individuals, we can have peace for a time, but is there a way to stuff the pillow of life's cacophonies into the pillowcase of peace? Life's a huge pillow, and peace can be a big enough pillowcase if I, and others, practice making it big enough.

Ultimately, peace is not static, not a destination or something to be lived in stillness. Peace is the discovery of the good inside me and the spiritual practice of living from and as that good. Sometimes, peace requires me to speak when I really don't want to and, conversely, most of the time, it requires me to be quiet.

The peace I live is seeking a world that expands justly, happily and gives room for all people to live justly and happily. It's a tall order. However, the first requirement is for me to experience peace — to live it, taste it, know it. Otherwise, how can I recognize it when it happens?

### AFFIRMATION

What would peace do?

## There's No Place Like Home

*The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.*

— Maya Angelou

*Through spiritual discernment, we see that we have within us a power which is greater than anything we shall ever contact; a power that can overcome every obstacle in our experience and set us safe, satisfied and at peace, healed and prosperous in a new light and a new life. If God be for us who can be against us?*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 146

There's no place like home, and home is where the heart is. I'm beginning to suspect that my longing for home is the longing to be free of the concerns of the world and to feel safe in my own skin.

*Safety* includes times I keep to myself because engaging in a difficult discussion or specific event takes me too far outside of myself. There have been other times when I've had to have that talk with someone who is creating chaos in the safety of my skin. Of course, it's *me*, having a conversation with the person who represents the part of myself who is creating chaos.

To feel safe in my skin and to have that feeling of being home, I remain vigilant to the internal order of things and the external environment that mirrors my internal world.

Today, I'm willing to look outside to see how I'm doing inside.

### AFFIRMATION

Home is the self with whom I feel most safe.



# A Beautiful New Agreement

*People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.*

— Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

*We are surrounded by a Mind, or Intelligence, that knows everything; that the potential knowledge of all things exists in this Mind; that the abstract essence of beauty, truth and wisdom coexist in the Mind of the Universe; that we also exist in It and may draw from It. But what we draw from it, we draw through the channel of our own minds.*

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” page 40

When I was about 6 years old, my mother told me, on a bad day when she was in a bad mood, that she didn’t like how I looked. Being a child, I was devoted to my mother, so I took this as truth about me. I maintained this thought well into adulthood. I thought and acted like there was something wrong with how I looked. I created an agreement with myself, in my mind, based on my child’s perception of my mother’s comment on a bad day.

When my daughter was born, people said she looked like me. I saw she was beautiful and to be the best mother I could be to this child, I had to make a new agreement with myself, to adopt a new truth. I released the notion that I was ugly. My daughter’s beauty gave me a new mirror, and I forgave myself and my mother.

Today, I live in the truth of my spirit and know that beauty is mine in body and circumstance.

## AFFIRMATION

I am beautiful inside and out.

# Made in the Image and Likeness of Desire

*Be faithful to that which exists within yourself.*

— André Gide

*Our Soul will never change or violate its own nature: All the denying of it will never change it; all the affirming of it will never make it any more than it is. But since it is what it is, and it works in the way that it works, it appears to each through his belief. It is done unto each one of us as we believe.*

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” page 34

The wish to respond to something greater is the desire of every human being. How many of us as children looked out at the stars or into the sky on a beautiful summer day and knew there was something greater? How many of us have wished that something greater would take hold of all of humanity and spontaneously cause us, as a whole, to do the right thing? It’s a desire.

Here’s the thing: Each of us is made in the image and likeness of the One so I am imbued with the authority to act in a way that allows me to experience my desire. If I desire peace, do I act and think in a way that brings peace? If I desire joy, do I act and think in a way that brings joy? Whatever my desire — you know where this is going — do I act and think in a way that brings me that experience?

It’s important for me to know and have the experience of my desire because I influence all the people around me. They, in turn, influence all of the people around them. Each of us has a far greater reach than we imagine. It’s a gift of oneness, a gift of being made in the image and likeness of the Divine.

## AFFIRMATION

I act and think in a way that brings me my desire.

# No Room for Doubt

*Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt.*

— William Shakespeare, "Measure for Measure"

*We should say to doubt: "Where did you come from, who is your father, etc. ... You have no place in my mind. Get out! I know that the faith within me now neutralizes all doubt." This is the scientific use of a mental statement. There must be no compromise with the consciousness.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 49

Doubt is a defense against confusion when I am lost in thought. It arrives as I forget about faith, confidence or about the truth of my being, which is that I'm never left out of life. I am not an afterthought or mistake. Doubt delivers itself when I begin to overthink things. You know, anything worth thinking is worth overthinking. The trouble with this process is doubt arrives in color, with big muscles to push me and any shred of confidence out of the way.

Doubt is sneaky. It doesn't start in some big way. Instead, it comes in a small thought. Are you sure? Is that what you really want? What if you make a mistake? What if this really is too much? Ugh. This is the process by which doubt gains color, adds muscle and becomes something I think is real. However, there is a remedy.

Decision is truly the only way to counteract doubt. Make a decision! Yes, there are moments I must make the decision, jump and then support myself on the decision I made. This is faith, and the decision is the open door to let in the truth. Most of the time, there is room for course corrections, and I must make the decision. Otherwise, doubt is the order of the day, and I do not like where it leads. I find supporting faith, truth and inner knowing is what leads me back to where I need to be.

## AFFIRMATION

I decide to trust myself.

# Free To Be Me

*Be yourself, but always your better self.*

— Karl G. Maeser

*The meaning of freedom implies the possibility of suffering, because if we are free we are free only by virtue of the possibility of choosing more than one course of action as an experience. There is no freedom or happiness, as spontaneous individuality, unless there can be a temporary restriction of bondage and unhappiness through the wrong use of freedom.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 110

The realization of "I am free" is a tall order. This means I am free to be the me I am meant to be. Sometimes this means I have to give up friends and family who helped me restrict my own freedom. I understand that sometimes freedom means I am choosing, in the case of restriction, to be less than I can be and, therefore, I have chosen the conditions and circumstances that keep me there.

In the past, I weighed 150 pounds more than I do now. I was in my late 20s when I decided I no longer wanted to be morbidly obese. I enlisted the help of a 12-step program and began to work a spiritual program. For me, these were drastic steps because I had not believed in God, so you can understand how desperate I was not to live like that anymore.

During the course of my weight loss, I realized the friends and family I had invited into my life to help me hide in the weight that came with self-loathing, shame, guilt, anger and fear. In breaking free of the weight, I found I had to give up the self, complete with all of the circumstances that kept me that way. To set myself free, I had to choose differently.

At the time, I was afraid, but now I am glad. I have a new life with all the elements that help me be the me I desire to be. I am happy to be me.

## AFFIRMATION

I am happy to be me.



## Choice Supported by Spiritual Practice

*Everything we say, do and think aligns us with darkness or light, love or grievance. Thus, everything is a spiritual practice, whether we are aware of it or not. We are constantly, in every moment, aligning with one way of being or another. The choice is ours to make each moment of the day.*

— Ted Dekker, “The Forgotten Way Meditations”

*We cannot live a choiceless life. Every day, every moment, every second, there is choice. If it were not so we would not be individuals.*

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” page 143

During the course of a day, so many things can happen, and I have reactions to those events. The events can be anything from world-size things like the pandemic, airlifts out of Afghanistan or a shooting at the local school, to smaller things like stubbing my toe or cutting my finger during dinner prep. In each instance, I have the ability to choose how I feel and what I’m going to do about it. The choice of emotion depends on the strength of my spiritual practice.

Every day, I pray whether I need to or not. I meditate for the same reason, and I find myself listening deeply to coworkers, friends and family. Deep listening, for me, is a spiritual practice. It takes me out of my head and puts me in the moment. In this way, I’m able to be present for whoever is talking. Having a strong spiritual practice gives me the presence of mind to be present for the moment. In this way, I know what to do when faced with a world or personal event.

In the case of the pandemic, my intuitive voice led me to be immunized. I did my part in helping to stop the spread of COVID-19. In the case of Afghanistan, I’ve been in deep prayer for the people and our governments. In the case of the school shooting, my husband and I went to the candlelight vigil to bear witness and hold the High Watch to the grief of a community stricken by the death of a child. And in the case of my cut finger, it required only a Band-Aid.

### AFFIRMATION

Today, I have a spiritual practice that can handle all the events of my life.

## Living in the Moment

*To live in the present moment is a miracle. The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth in the present moment, to appreciate the peace and beauty that are available now.*

— Thich Nhất Hạnh

*We should also erase the thoughts of yesterday that would rob us of today’s happiness. ... The Spirit knows no past and is not affected by the belief in any. The past is swallowed up in the victory of a perfect present, which is filled with love and protection.*

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” pages 245-246

Recognizing that I’m living one moment at a time helps me. The moment my mind wanders off into some other moment, I’m a house divided. There are times when I’ve just finished praying, had a great meditation, mindfully eaten my breakfast, gotten in the car and then suddenly someone is driving crazy around me.

I leap into fear and all the beautiful moments I had up until then fly right out the window with the crazy driver. I’m shaken and afraid. I’m angry and not wishing the driver well. What happened?

Most of the time, my fear is based on the thought that I might have an accident or die suddenly. It’s a startling thought. The thought takes me out of the moment and into some moment I would not like to experience. However, if I take a deep breath and send blessings to the driver and the other startled drivers around me, I can make my way back to the present moment.

When all of me is aware of being in the moment, I’m in a better place and have a better chance of keeping my wits about me.

### AFFIRMATION

I am in the moment — perfect, whole and complete.

## What To Do When You Don't Know

*There are things known and there are things unknown, and in between are the doors of perception.*

— Aldous Huxley

*When we speak into his Mind, we have sown a seed of thought in the Absolute and we may rest in peace. We need not make haste, for it is done unto us as we believe. "In that day they that call upon me I will answer."*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 148

There is no place where God is not. Since God's presence is the place where I am, then I have the ability to call on this spiritual wisdom any time, any place. One of my favorite practices when confronted with something I've never encountered before, is to say to myself, "I don't know how to handle this, but if I did, what would I do?"

I can safely say that, in every instance, the answer has come. For example, many years ago while living in the Silverlake district of Los Angeles, I moved to a new home. For the move, I rented a 24-foot truck and, being an inexperienced truck driver, didn't realize how big it would be. When I saw it, I climbed up into the cab and left the rental yard. However, when I began to drive the truck up the narrow road with a hairpin turn that led to my house, I found myself on the verge of hanging the truck up on the guardrail. The truck was too big to go around the curve. I asked myself in that moment, "I don't know how to handle this, but if I did, what would I do?"

The answer came. I would drive the truck forward past the turn and then put it in reverse up the hill all the way to the house. I parked the truck (triumphantly) in front of the house, and my move was successful. I just reversed the process when leaving.

### AFFIRMATION

When confronted with something I've never experienced before, I ask, "I don't know how to handle this, but if I did, what would I do?"

## Surrendering to the Moment

*Always say yes to the present moment. What could be more futile, more insane, than to create inner resistance to what already is? ... Say yes to life and see how life suddenly starts working for you rather than against you.*

— Eckhart Tolle

*The soul must make a complete surrender of itself to the Spirit. That is, the Law must come under subjection to the Spirit. The will of the Spirit is peace, clear thinking and happiness. It could have no other will.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 405

I'm not a person who prays for patience. My experience is that, when I pray for patience, I'm given more things I need to patient about. I'm not patient nor do I pretend or want to be. But I do have an approach that works for me. Instead of practicing patience, I surrender. For me, surrender is far easier, and it allows me to let go of the immediate situation in the name of peace and sanity. Surrender allows me to let go and call forth the divine quality I need to be a blessing to the moment.

One day I was in the checkout line at a big box store. The lines were long, it was hot and people were jostling each other. On top of that, fans the size of helicopter blades were whirring overhead. I was uncomfortable and felt myself becoming impatient and frustrated standing there. I had the realization that my mood was probably not helping, so I surrendered all of it — my mood, the people, the time it was taking and the energy of the maddening crowd. I felt peace settle over me, and then I had a further thought: What if all these people were members of my congregation? Would I still be treating them with these moody thoughts?

Of course not. I'd love them and have far more tolerance for them and for myself. I let myself relax into this thought and began loving these people like I did my spiritual community. Suddenly the line began moving faster, people were smiling at me and I got through the line in peace.

### AFFIRMATION

I surrender all people, places and things to the peace of this moment.

## Disrupting the Mental Equivalent

*Trust me, you can't change anything without causing some degree of disruption. It's impossible; that is exactly what change is. Some people are uncomfortable with the disruption that change causes, but the disruption is necessary if anything is going to change.*

— Afeni Shakur

*The limit of our ability to demonstrate depends on our ability to provide a mental equivalent of our desires, for the law of correspondence works from the belief to the thing. But it is within our power to provide a greater mental equivalent through the unfolding of consciousness; and this growth from within will finally lead to freedom.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 306

I grew up in a traditional family with traditional values in a traditional community. It was quite lovely really. Traditions kept us going, and I felt like I belonged because of it. I loved my family and my town — still do. I also grew up in the 1970s just as hippies began moving into my hometown. They definitely disrupted these traditions.

As a young girl, I found myself watching these hippies with fascination; they wore flowers in their hair, were scantily dressed, didn't go to church and seemed friendly. They threw caution to the wind, drove old cars and lived in communes. Being young at the time, I knew it caused consternation with my relatives but, man, were they intriguing. Even at a young age, I read a lot, and the hippies gave me the vision and courage that my life could be different than what traditions dictated.

This particular disruption of traditions gave me the conviction to go to college in another state and, eventually, adopt a spiritual path that was different from the one I grew up with. The disruption gave me the courage to continue loving my family even when they didn't agree with me and eventually gave me the courage to love myself even when I didn't appear to fit the mold.

### AFFIRMATION

I live my life with conviction and courage.

## The Shadow Puppets of the Soul

*Keep your face to the sun and you will never see the shadows.*

— Helen Keller

*We can sit in the shade or move into the sunshine. Sitting in the shadow, we may not really believe that there is any sunshine. But the sun would be there all the time. And all the time we are in bondage, the real freedom exists. It is there but we must awake to it. The Law of Mind as quickly creates one form as another for us, and we must allow the patterns of our thought to become molded from the highest sense of Reality we possess.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 411

I love the sun! I remember being very little, 3 or 4 years old, and loving the feeling of the sun on my face. I loved watching how things standing in the sun's way created shadows and loved realizing that the only reason shadows could be created was because the sun was shining. The epitome of this, for me, was my renditions of shadow puppets or me standing in various poses to create shadow designs. All of this happened because I could block the sun and create a new design from the shadow.

I think of the holidays this way, too. During this time of year, people all over the world celebrate holy traditions or their version of the return of the sun, the winter solstice. People all over the world call for sunlight. The celebration/worship creates a spiritual sunniness that shines relentlessly on everyone.

I believe this is what causes the soul shadows to become more pronounced. For those of us who are lonely, the loneliness feels bigger. For those of us in conflict with friends or family members, the conflicts become more pronounced.

Truly, it's not that the holidays are any more difficult. It's that people all over the world cause the spiritual sun to shine and it just feels more pronounced. We are all experiencing the shadow puppets of our souls. It's OK — and this, too, shall pass.

### AFFIRMATION

Today, I let the sun illuminate my peace and beauty.



# Solstice Altar of Light

TUESDAY DECEMBER 21, 2021

*This is the solstice, the still point of the sun, its cusp and mid-night, the year's threshold and unlocking, where the past lets go of and becomes the future; the place of caught breath.*

— Margaret Atwood

*If we could give up our diseases — offer them on the altar of faith to the Giver of all life — we would be healed. It is not easy to release our troubles; we are prone to linger with them. But, by effectual and fervent prayer, we gradually lose false thought into its native nothingness. God is perfect life, and when we enter His light, we are healed.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 501

The winter solstice signifies the sun's simultaneous death and rebirth. It's a time to leave mortal pain behind and adopt the healing of Spirit. It's a time to be reborn.

Here's a meditation: Imagine a beautiful altar made of light. Go to the altar and leave all you no longer need or want on it. That's right. Today is the day to let go and let God.

When you are finished putting all your pain, the terrible memories, the shame, the guilt, everything you no longer need on the altar, watch the altar of light absorb it all. Watch it become light.

Now look down and see a shallow pool of beautiful light at your feet. Step in and let the light fill you up. Let it fill all the spaces that once held the stuff you just left behind. When you feel complete, step out of the pool and return to your body in the room where you have been meditating.

Let yourself be renewed.

## AFFIRMATION

Every moment I am made new. The past has no hold on me.

# Healing Miracles

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 22, 2021

*As my sufferings mounted, I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my situation — either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course.*

— Martin Luther King Jr.

*Healing is not creating a perfect idea or a perfect body; it is revealing an idea which is already perfect. Healing is not a process, it is a revelation, through the thought of the practitioner to the thought of patient.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 212

These days I find myself remembering remnants of my life, piecing them together in ways I hadn't before. This morning I found myself deep in thought about my father. He was only 50 years old when he died, so at 60, I've already lived 10 years longer than he did. My heart filled with compassion at his suffering, and I realized that he must have been affected by his time in the military, along with other events from his life. I found myself praying for him again, realizing I was praying for a father who passed away 43 years ago.

In this moment, his prayer is my prayer because I have an internalized father. His wounds are my wounds because I carry him with me. The importance of my compassion for him becomes the compassion I carry for myself. My father suffered through several illnesses, and it's become incumbent on me to heal the part of myself that is my father, whether the conditions have manifested in me or not. I would prefer not to suffer those same illnesses, and it would honor him if I didn't have to suffer.

After my prayer, I found myself remembering my father's zest for life, his humor, his intelligence and his extreme love for his family. I want to keep these qualities, too. My prayer continues to be his prayer.

## AFFIRMATION

In remembering, I hold the highest and best for myself and others.

## The Courage To Be Happy

*One thing: You have to walk and create the way by your walking; you will not find a ready-made path. It is not so cheap, to reach to the ultimate realization of truth. ... It is just like the sky: The birds fly, but they don't leave any footprints. You cannot follow them; there are no footprints left behind.*

— Osho

*We must believe. We must learn how to believe. We should treat ourselves until we do believe. No one ever started at the top. Let us be happy to begin right where we are and grow.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," pages 401-402

Withstanding pain is not the same as healing. There are different sorts of pain: emotional, mental, spiritual, physical. The hardest part about pain is that it usually doesn't confine itself to just one of these categories. It usually manifests in all four. Pain is a sign that something is off, something is not true, and I've been pretending I could live with it. My being and my body know what I can live with, and what I'm capable of. Can I follow the truth to where I need to go?

For many years, I was morbidly obese. The thoughts that supported this weight all centered on my belief that I wasn't good enough. So I tried hard all the time. The more I tried, the more I ate, and the larger I became. I couldn't find clothes that fit. I thought poorly of myself, and all the conditions I attracted to myself supported these thoughts.

Eventually, I began to see that I wanted to be happy. This idea took me to new people, new places and to Science of Mind. I found myself having the courage to be happy. This meant that I had to think differently about myself. It meant I had to let go of the people, ideas and conditions that previously supported my weight and unhappiness.

I followed the truth of my happiness to the truth of my being.

### AFFIRMATION

Today, I follow my truth.

## Treasuring Each of Us As the Bloom

*So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*

— The Gospel according to Luke, 2:16-19

*Christ means the Universal Idea of Sonship, of which each is a member. That is why we are spoken of as members of that One Body; and why we are told to have that Mind in us "which was also in Christ Jesus."*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," pages 357-358

Jesus was the flower of his family and humanity. Blossoms are the beauty of the plant, what the entire plant works for and supports. The flower, the bloom, is the essence of the plant, and I can imagine that once the flower blooms, the entire plant celebrates.

Families are like plants, and each individual member is the blossom, too. The entire family is held in each member. In essence, each of us is the bloom of the family, and whether it's apparent or not, the family celebrates our appearance. Because of this, we are each given the opportunity to bloom just as we are. In fact, it's important for us to do the work of blooming because that's why we're here. We are each meant to be here, whether the family story supports this or not.

The story of Christmas is the story of the birth of each I AM. I am born to manifest the rightful and true story of my life. No matter the appearance, the entire universe celebrates my birth and the birth of every I AM. Can I do the same?

### AFFIRMATION

The entire universe celebrates my birth.

## The Pure Power of Love

*I like to compare the holiday season with the way a child listens to a favorite story. The pleasure is in the familiar way the story begins, the anticipation of familiar turns it takes, the familiar moments of suspense, and the familiar climax and ending.*

— Fred Rogers

*Each maintains a stream of consciousness in the One Mind, and anyone contacting this stream may objectify it. Because of the Universality of the medium, the individual stream of consciousness is always omnipresent, whether the one from whom it emanated be in the flesh or out of it. Time and space are unknown in Mind. ... The past and the present are one.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 422

When I met my husband, I was the single mother of a 2-year-old daughter. I did not like Christmas. It had so many negative connotations to me that I preferred other holidays instead. However, my husband and his mother loved Christmas. They saw it as an opportunity to celebrate with family in every way. In particular, they saw it as an opportunity to make magic for my 2-year-old.

There was magic to be found in the pure expression of love they purveyed. I loved my daughter with all of my heart, so how could I argue with that? My husband and mother-in-law made Christmas special.

Over time, I found myself caught up in the magic of birth, Santa, family, love — and it eventually expanded beyond my family to my congregation and the world. I was willing to believe in miracles, magic and the pure power of love. This is what Christmas means to me now.

### AFFIRMATION

I believe in the magic of love.

## The Power of Yes

*Everything began with a yes. One molecule said yes to another molecule and life was born.*

— Clarice Specter

*The Spirit is Self-Propelling. It is Absolute and All. It is Self-Existent and has all life within Itself. It is the Word and the Word is Volition. It has choice because It is Volition. It is Will because It chooses. It is Free Spirit because It knows nothing outside Itself and, therefore, nothing different from Itself.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 81

Yes is a powerful word, and it has set everything I've ever experienced in my life in motion, whether I liked it or not. To paraphrase Ernest Holmes, I can't pray for something and then complain when I get it. I agreed to all of it whether I know it or not; whether I have a big enough perspective to know what I set in motion. Ultimately, I suspect that my soul made a contract with the universe to experience my life, so here I am.

Sometimes, the difficulty about yes is it can creep in as the negative. When I worry, I am saying "yes" to all the bad things that might happen. The worry-yes saps me of my vitality and ultimately, since yes is my word, I have now prayed the worry into existence. The same thing happens with the angry-yes, fear-based-yes, and the anxiety-yes. If I give it enough attention, these "yeses" come into play. These "yeses" have also brought some things in my life I wish I could do over. There were opportunities I had that I chose to ignore because I didn't have the confidence or the courage at the time.

Then there are opportunities I did take: schooling, relationships, motherhood and founding a new center. The opportunities I took shaped my life in ways I love.

The constructive opportunities I said yes to became the guiding lights of my life. Today, I am more cognizant of a positive yes and how yes shapes my life — good, bad and indifferent. Yes is what sets my life in motion.

### AFFIRMATION

The light of my yes guides my life.



## Reviewing My Love

*The philosophy of the wisest person that ever existed is mainly derived from the act of introspection.*

— William Godwin

*There is a place in us which lies open to the Infinite; but when the Spirit brings Its gift, by pouring Itself through us, It can give to us only what we take. This taking is mental. If we persist in saying that Life will not give us that which is good ("God will not answer my prayer") then It cannot, for Life must reveal Itself to us through our intelligence.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 151

New Year's resolutions are not my thing. Years ago, I'd set a random goal after January 1 so I could feel better about myself. If I really meant it this time, I'd go great guns for about a month and a half and then slowly taper off to my old habits. By mid- to late February, I'd be back where I started. I knew I needed a different method. The resolution was only helping me feel bad about myself.

Self-reflection is what I choose instead. I can stop for self-observation anytime, anywhere, so I'm not particularly hampered by whether I'm out of New Year's range. (I'm not into unnecessary, self-imposed deadlines.) If nothing else, Science of Mind teaches me life is lived from the inside out. Life begins in the unseen and moves into the seen, which means everything I see began as a thought, an idea.

As the year ends, I review the "seen" of my life to recognize what needs changing. What happened this year? How did I grow? What did I do well? What could I have done better? Are there amends I need to make? What else do I need to know? These questions keep me on track. The purpose of these questions is to see where love could have been more prevalent in my life. As I move through my own process of good, I find myself recognizing I am inextricably intertwined with all the people around me. As I act, am I blessing? Did I bring my best?

## Fun Is Freedom's Call

*Make space in your life for the things that matter, for family and friends, love and generosity, fun and joy. Without this, you will burn out in mid-career and wonder where your life went.*

— Jonathan Sacks

*I am the spirit of joy within me. I am the spirit of peace within me, of poise and of power. I am the spirit of happiness within me. I radiate Life; I am Life. There is One Life and that Life is my life now.*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 292

There were six kids in my family. While this may seem like a lot of kids, it meant I had built-in friends to play with, and we loved to play. We'd make up games, ride our bikes, run until the sun ran out and fall asleep happy. As a result, even in my adulthood, I love to laugh and have fun. Laughing gives me the freedom in the moment to be my true, authentic self, the me filled with joy, peace and happiness. Laughing is also good for my health and restores my sense of sanity. Besides, laughing is a form of having fun, and it's fun to have fun, yes?

Fun is also a form of freedom. Freedom's call is happening all the time. It can take the most sublime form when I decide to love someone even more whether they deserve it or not, or it can be subtle like when I choose something to eat that's better for my body. Freedom is calling.

I feel it today. I desire fun, and I want to give myself the grace to spend time with my loved ones. I find myself arranging my chores at work and home to accommodate this.

This is freedom. Freedom is the ability to live my highest self, a self that manifests love, peace and blessings at work, home and in my community. I am enough, and I have enough to make it so.

### AFFIRMATION

I am the best love I can be in all ways always.

### AFFIRMATION

Today, I am free to have fun.

## Following Internal Guidance

*Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after.*

— Henry David Thoreau

*Intuition is God in man, revealing to him the Realities of Being; and just as instinct guides the animal, so would intuition guide man, if he would allow it to do so.*

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” page 342

My mother and grandmother used their intuition all the time. They spoke openly about feelings they got about someone, a situation or something going on. I was fortunate to grow up in this family because no one ever negated my intuition. They may not have agreed with my choices, but they never negated my intuition or any stirrings I might have about the unseen world. The unseen was as real as the seen, and I grew up thinking this was normal.

When I arrived in the world outside my family, I found that many people were actually afraid of their intuition and felt they couldn't trust it because they couldn't see it. I found this continuously as an adult until I arrived at Science of Mind, which told me the world was created from the invisible to the visible, and often the only way to connect is through the intuition. I felt right at home.

Science of Mind taught me my intuition connects me with the internal message that you and I have for ourselves and each other. As an individualized expression of Good, I need to hear this message. It's the guiding idea that informs my life.

The internal message doesn't have to be the message for all time. It can be as simple as what I'm wearing for the day. It can go deeper when I have to talk with someone about something important, and it can be as creative as what am I going to do on a project or what needs to happen to change my life. The internal message is always waiting to be known.

### AFFIRMATION

I know what I know as soon as I choose to know it.

## Vision Banishes Doubt

*By banishing doubt and trusting your intuitive feelings, you clear a space for the power of intention to flow through.*

— Wayne W. Dyer

*Our consciousness of God is our real self and at the same time it is both personal and impersonal. It is personal in that it is personified through us and it is impersonal in that we are all using a universal power. When we know that we are using such a power, all doubt as to our ability to use it will vanish and our words will be spoken with spontaneous reliance on Truth.*

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” page 408

These days, there is doubt. This current doubt stems from the pandemic and its consequences to the economy and how people interact. Great changes have happened quickly during the past 18 months. In this rapidly changing landscape, we encounter doubt. However, doubt is not truth. *Truth* is truth. Doubt comes from seeing what I know change so quickly into something I don't know. It's natural to not know; doubt is something else.

Doubt is the stuff that erodes confidence, security, happiness and truth. Doubt comes from insecurity and that's where it needs to return. Instead, it's OK to sit in the unknowing of quickly changing circumstances.

Our job as Religious Scientists is to sit in the unknowing and vision. The vision is what creates light on the path and gives us a sense of knowing, even when we can't immediately see the results. The vision of what is to be is up to each of us individually and collectively.

### AFFIRMATION

I envision a world that works for all of us.

# The Experience of Peace

*Nobody can bring you peace but yourself.*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

*There is One Limitless Life, which returns to the thinker exactly what he thinks into it. One! One! One! "In all, over all and through all." Talk, live, act, believe and know that you are a center in this One. All the Power there is, all the Presence there is, all the Love there is, all the Peace there is, all the Good there is, and the only God there is, is Omnipresent. Consequently, the Infinite is in and through man and is in and through everything. "Act as though I am and I will be."*

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 323

Wouldn't peace all over the world be wonderful? Peace, to me, would look like people taking care of each other. It would look like equitable distribution of food and resources to all people so that no one would go to bed hungry tonight. Peace would look like shelter for each person, loving relationships and great self-regard for ourselves and each other.

Peace, which is vibrant and vital, would call us all to care for the environment. Life would be the standard by which all governments rendered all decisions.

Today, I can call peace into my life, and do my part. What does peace feel like in me? Can I honestly say I experience it?

If I am to recognize peace, I must have an experience of it. From the experience of peace, what else can I know for myself, my family, friends and community? Peace is wonderful, and I can have an experience of it today.

## AFFIRMATION

Peace on Earth includes me.



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We honor all people, faith paths and religions. Our sacred focus is creating a world that works for everyone. Find "What We Believe" on page 10.



# THE JOURNEY OF BECOMING



*Photo by Standret*

BY PETRĀ WELDES

The thing that is really hard, and really amazing,  
is giving up on being perfect and  
beginning the work of becoming yourself.

— ANNA QUINDLEN

Maybe my childhood sounds a bit like yours? I was a straight A student, yet my father focused on the occasional A- and the inevitable C in penmanship. I also tended to be pretty self-sufficient and could do my chores without supervision, yet my mother checked everything meticulously, and the smallest miss needed to be corrected before I was allowed to go out and play.

I learned to be quiet, helpful and excel in every dance, sport or instrument lesson I was enrolled in. I was constantly striving to be a good, well-mannered and accomplished child. In other words, I wanted to be perfect.

I was also one of those students in junior and senior high who had potential, and it was a major disappointment to those around me when I didn't live up to it. Along with trauma at home, this insistence on being perfect created the perfect storm within me. To deal with it, I began smoking cigarettes and pot, drinking, doing drugs and being sexually active — all while still carrying straight As. And then I ran away from home at 15. What a mess.

Stumbling into Science of Mind at 17 was my lifeline and my recovery. I learned I didn't need to be perfect because I already was perfect. What an amazing revelation to truly understand that our inner essence is the Presence of the indwelling Divine Life, and my life is a place where the Infinite is making Itself manifest. It took me years to grasp and ultimately embody this, but it sure made me feel better, connected and powerful. I learned to demonstrate, manifest and heal myself as well as release my addictions.

This idea that we are already spiritually perfect — that the life I am is the "I AM that I AM," the Life Divine — is an amazing sense of homecoming. As we come to recognize the truth of the Life Divine, "The Thing Itself" (as Ernest Holmes calls It), we are taught to explore Its many attributes and qualities.

My favorite list of Divine attributes comes from Thomas Troward in "The Edinburgh Lectures": love, life, light, peace, power, beauty and joy. It's not an exhaustive list, but Troward makes a good case for how each one falls naturally out of the one before, and ultimately all other qualities are aspects of these seven.



# THE JOURNEY OF BECOMING

I'm sure we've all added qualities to this list, but the most important thing is that these are *absolute* qualities, fully present, and in the causal reality of Spirit, they have no opposite. This causal reality of absolute perfection is living in, through and as each one of us. Wow! What a revelation. Now we can all relax and stop trying to be perfect because we already are.

## THE TIGHTROPE TO SELF-DISCOVERY

Understanding that we are already perfect was the first part of healing my obsessive perfectionism my childhood created. However, it also slowly dawned on me that my life continued to show old patterns, unconscious behaviors and a downright lack of manifesting this perfection.

I was still often anxious, angry, rebellious, intolerant, judgmental, scared, confused and uncertain. And I also still wanted to grow. I wanted to become *better* — a better leader, mother, speaker, partner, teacher, friend, coach, environmentalist, citizen and critical thinker. How could all this be true if it's true that we are already perfect?

I had also become obsessed with learning how to simply *be* and *not be driven by doing*, accomplishing or achieving, to consistently remember that "being present to what is" is enough. Except for me, it wasn't enough. After being with *what is*, I couldn't help thinking about *what could be*. And isn't this what Science of Mind taught me? That I could manifest a life that works for me and be part of creating a world that works for everyone? That sounds very different than *being with what is*. Are you as confused as I was?

This is where my journey of becoming began. How can something that is perfect in its beingness, become ... well anything? Doesn't *become* mean more, different or something else than what it is, as it is, right now? How are *being* and *becoming* related in an infinitely perfect universe that springs from an infinitely perfect Divine Life?



**Like the rings of a great sequoia,  
our lives are layers of experiences:  
inclement weather followed by the  
sun's healing rays, harsh conditions  
washed away by the nourishing rain  
of realization; who we truly are.**

# THE JOURNEY OF BECOMING

## CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE TRUE SELF

I contemplated, meditated, explored and tried to feel into this for many years, both in my spiritual mind treatments (affirmative prayer) and my spiritual practice. Here are some key components that move me.

- The Hindu notion that the fabric of the physical universe is based on complementary pairs of opposites: yin/yang, space/time and wave/particle.
- The absolute qualities of Spirit can be actualized anywhere on the spectrum of fully present (love) to completely absent (hate). There is no force for the opposite, just a complete sense of separation from Its presence.
- The physical universe, in its infinite vastness and diversity, is necessary, otherwise the Infinite Reality of "The Thing Itself" is unrealized; it's only the *potential* for all things.
- In other words, *being* isn't enough without expression and experience, which is inherently manifested through the complementary nature (pairs of opposites) of the physical universe.
- And finally is the law of growth. How many times have you heard the creative process described using the seed-soil-plant analogy? The seed is the intention/cause (Spirit), the soil is the Universal Principle and Creative Medium which knows how to make the seed into the plant (law), and the plant is the manifestation in form (body) in the physical space/time continuum. But if we look at the process of seed to plant, while the oak is inherent in some absolute sense in the acorn, it must still grow from seedling to sapling to mature tree. In other words, it must become what it is intended to be.

Maybe that's too much abstract philosophy, but this series of contemplations led me to the realization that maybe I am in the process of becoming who I am meant to be. Or another way of saying it might be: "The innate being I AM is becoming that out here in the world." Perhaps this is what Pierre Teilhard de Chardin meant when he said, "We are spiritual beings having a human experience."

Why would Spirit need to create physical form? To become! To become all the ways the perfect tree can express "treeness," from the stunted 200-year-old alpine spruce to a sequoia standing 200 feet tall

# THE JOURNEY OF BECOMING

to the oak blasted by lightening that is still growing but only on one side. Who is to say which one of these trees is perfect? They are all perfectly expressing as the tree they came here to be. Why would a perfect, Universal Life individualize as imperfect human experience? To become! To become more of Itself through all the multiplicity of ways humans live and experience life.

## AN EMERGENT EVOLUTION

For you and me, this means our journey of becoming is necessary for the unfolding wholeness of the Universe Itself. Every moment of growth — whether in awareness of truth, in alignment with Spirit's qualities, in skill or capability — is the being we are becoming more fully expressed and realized, adding to the infinite expansion of life as a whole.

Holmes calls it “emergent evolution.” As we become more — presence more qualities of Spirit, actualizing them in the human experience — we are evolving humanity and all of life. We are actually evolving consciousness itself. We can stop trying to *be* and *be perfect* and rest in the paradox that *we are* perfectly imperfect, being and becoming, spirit and human — and that *this* is our wholeness.

Want some more things to contemplate with me on this journey of becoming? Spend time letting these quotes work in you.

*Since Universal Spirit is infinite, the possibility of human expansion is limitless. Therefore, evolution or unfoldment is the eternal process through which Being passes into becoming. ... We could never become the whole Universal Spirit for then we would have exhausted the possibilities of the Infinite, which by definition is an impossibility.*

— Ernest Holmes

*The greatest good which our mind is able to conceive should be affirmed as a part of our everyday experience. From such daily meditation, we should venture forth into a life of action with the will to do, the determination to be and a joy in becoming.*

— Ernest Holmes

*Without you forever becoming who you are meant to be, the One Infinite Universal Life is not fully expressed and cannot fully experience all of Itself.*

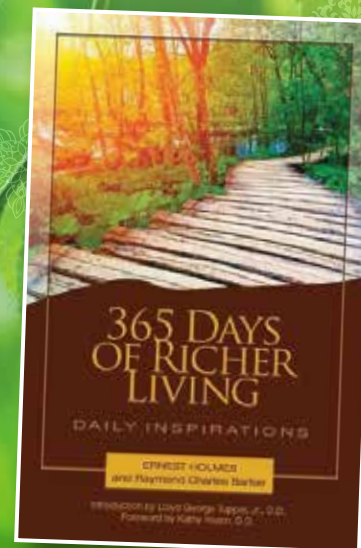
— Petra Weldes

Do be do be do. I think Frank Sinatra really did get it right. ❧

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## Journey of Becoming

### The High Watch of Oneness

The Creative Force of the universe is infinite good and eternal oneness. It is ever-present truth, consistently expressing Its ongoing love and grace throughout the universe. This Power is undeniably present throughout the realms of the formless as well as the realms of form. This is the Most High, first cause to all expression.

Oneness is the Source of all, which must include me. I am an individualization of this oneness moving through me as Spirit, mind and body.

My life is completely one with all that is. I recognize and hold sacred this truth. I have faith and trust in this one Source as my life.

At this time of year, when the light appears most ephemeral and oblique, I consciously choose to keep the high watch of oneness first and foremost in my mind and heart, and in that, I am aware of my immediate and total oneness with the One True Light. From this alignment with the most high, I know there is, and can be, no opposition to my good. I am continually guided to an ever-greater expression of wisdom and love.

I live in a state of awareness of my life from this place of the high watch, and I see and celebrate my spiritually discerned health, wealth, love and creative self-expression. The light I know illumines my ever-expanding peace, perfection and beauty.

I accept my part in the universe. I accept oneness as my prism and lens through which I see and experience all of life, the inner and the outer. My consciousness is continually aware of good expanding and multiplying throughout the cosmos, throughout all expressions of the One.

I am in deep, powerful gratitude for this perspective of the high watch and appreciative for its manifestations. I am profoundly grateful for this and for all that comes from it.

I surrender these words of the high to the Most High with trust, release and faith that they are so. **And so it is.** ☸

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REV. DR. DEBORAH GORDON *is the co-founder of Centre for Spiritual Living Kelowna, British Columbia, with her husband Rev. Dr. Kenn Gordon. Visit [CSLKelowna.org](http://CSLKelowna.org) for more information.*

## A Miracle From Fish

On one occasion, a tax collector was in Capernaum collecting two coins of silver as a head (personal) tax from everyone. He approached Peter and asked, "Would not your master give his two coins?" Then immediately, Jesus told Peter, "Go to the sea and throw out a hook, and the first fish that comes up, open its mouth and you will find a coin. Take it and give it for me and for you."

Jesus had to pay taxes like other citizens. There were times when he and his disciples were without money. In this case, neither Jesus nor Peter had any money. Nonetheless, the Galilean prophet and teacher had faith in God. He knew God would provide the tax money.

This episode expresses other puzzling, Aramaic, figurative terms of speech that cannot be easily translated into other languages, such as, "You will find a shekel in the mouth of a fish." What this mean is, "You will quickly catch a fish and sell it for a shekel." Near Easterners often say, "There are \$10 in the horn of my ox," meaning the ox can be sold for \$10. They also say, "There is a dollar in each one of my lambs." And the meaning is simply that each lamb can be sold for a dollar.

In the land of Israel at that time, taxes could be paid in kind. Animals, grain, cheese, butter, fish and other products were exchanged in the marketplaces and accepted for taxes.

Peter was a fisherman by trade. Jesus assured him that the first catch would be worth a shekel. This would be sufficient to meet the taxes for both of them.

When Jesus told Peter to take the coin from the mouth of the fish and give it to the tax collector, he was telling him to sell the fish and it will be worth the amount they needed to pay the taxes. However, the fish was either sold to someone else or given directly to the tax collector. But readers of the gospel story who do not know the Aramaic idiomatic style of speaking understandably take it too literally. ☸



**ROCCO A. ERRICO, Th.D., Ph.D.,** is founder and president of the Noohra Foundation in Smyrna, Georgia.

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## The Rainbow Bridge



### MURPHY THE HUMAN WHISPERER

watches over his human, Rev. Dr. Bob Luckin, when he isn't working on his column. Send your questions to [Murphy@CSL.org](mailto:Murphy@CSL.org). Regretfully, he can't reply to all email.

I've been told that when dogs like me, some cats and a few birds go to sleep for the last time, they cross a rainbow bridge.

Although it sounds like they go to a wonderful place, I haven't seen humans talk about it without tears in their eyes. I've also been told that when humans close their eyes for the last time, a stairway to heaven awaits.

I don't know if there's a rainbow bridge or a stairway to heaven. I believe at some point all creatures will enter a deep sleep followed by a great awakening.

My reasonable mind argues against this, but there is an unreasonable part of me that knows a greater truth. My bones tell me I'm not my bones. My little brain tells me I'm not my brain.

If a mighty oak can live inside an acorn, anything is possible. I believe time has no beginning or end, and neither do you or I.

In a dream, I saw a stone weep when its river ran dry and an eagle dancing with the sky. I saw a bobcat kill a rabbit. I watched a spark of light leave the rabbit's body, and I knew the rabbit hadn't died.

You and I are on a journey. I feel sure we'll meet many times, in many places and in many different forms. We need to remember that nothing really dies. ☘



### Our life force simply changes form.

Murphy believes all creatures will eventually enter a deep sleep for a great awakening.



A person wearing a blue jacket and a hat sits on a wooden deck, looking out over a vast, snowy mountain landscape. A small dog sits beside them. The background features a dense forest of snow-covered trees and a prominent, rocky mountain peak under a clear sky. The scene is peaceful and contemplative.

# New Foundations for Thinking

BY Ernest Holmes

*Photo by Soloviova Liudmyla*

For the most part, you seem to be living in an age of turmoil. Both the external world and your inner world of the mind appear to be in a state of confusion. There seems to be a lack of stability, of what to think and what should be a proper reaction to things and events. But then, most people have felt that way about the period in which they have lived.

However, throughout the ages there have been those who have found enjoyment, peace and contentment in spite of the condition of the world around them.

What they have been able to discover, you can discover. But the secret, if there is any, lies in the fundamental basic mental attitude you are able to establish. Your mind needs a firm, intelligent and emotionally satisfying concept of the nature of Life, and a recognition of your position in It and relationship to It.

It is your basic concepts in this respect that color all of your thinking, that determine the nature of your thoughts, which become the things in your life, and enable you to adequately deal with all your problems. In the ideas advanced in the following pages, you can find a surety and a security on which you can build a better life.

## A New Idea

That we are entering a new cycle of experience is certain. It is impossible to pick up any periodical of the day without noting some evidence of the change of thought that is going on. We hear of the new psychology, the new science, the new religion, the new universe. What does this mean? And where is it leading us?

Has the faith of our forefathers been shattered on the rocks of a cold science? Has the shock that religion suffered in recent years undermined our spiritual forces? Has our new philosophy solved the riddle of the universe? Are we lost in the fog of speculative theories? Is anything left that is certain? What can we believe? On all sides these questions are being asked, and whoever finds a reasonable answer will have the world for an audience.

There is no lack of interest. Life, hope and love are still the dominant factors in people's thoughts. God may be a myth, but people still long for Divine guidance. Immortality may be an illusion, but people still hope the future will not be an oblivion. Religion may be a mental hallucination, but people still have a mystic sense of Reality, an intuitive perception of Something higher.



Aspiration may have turned into the ashes of dead hopes, but the urge to go on still pushes us forward. Science may have failed to find the ultimate Cause, but people still sense an invisible Presence. The age-old question, unanswered, still stimulates the interest: From whence the spirit, whither bound the soul? It is impossible to avoid the issue.

We are so constituted that we must go on. We cannot stop. People have always believed in some kind of God and in some type of savior. They still believe. The will to believe is our strongest passion, our greatest incentive, our constant source of inspiration.

Can we by searching find God? We have looked everywhere. The search has been intense, exhilarating and persistent. But have we found Him? Some will answer yes and others no. Those who answer yes have the right to be heard as well as those who answer no. Both are sincere and each is motivated by the same purpose/necessity.

Anyone who doubts that the quest of humankind is after God is unacquainted with the human mind. The two great desires are for unity with the Spirit and for the realization of immortality. Beside these, all other desires sink into utter insignificance. To question this is to admit a profound ignorance of the workings of people's thought.

Can such a universal demand be without a foundation in Reality? And if we have failed to find God or failed to realize the eternity of our own being, may it not be because we have failed to realize what God and existence mean?

## *What Is God? Where Can We Find It?*

God is not a person, yet God is more than a principle. The creative insistence of the universe, the emotional background of all incentive is God — the Urge and the act, the Thinker and that which is thought, the Conceiver and the conceived.

Cause and effect are but two sides of the same coin. Who looks for God as a person must look into the personification. The Universe may be impersonal as law and as essence, but It is forever personifying Itself. It is revealed in creation.

Only the one who loves comprehends the meaning and the depth of love. Love declares itself through its personification. It is known by

its works. It is as real as we make it. It is not a platitude, but a Divine passion. If we would know God as love, we must become love. Those who have done this claim to know God as love. Dare we deny the validity of this claim? Can the coldly skeptical sense the Divine emotion of a love that proceeds from the fundamental unity and includes the entire creation as a manifestation of one central Cause? Could we love the individual unless we have some inner awareness existing prior to the advent of the individual?

The possibility of love existed before its expression or it never could have evolved. The greatest lovers have ever been the most godlike. If we would look for a God of love, we must look long and deeply into each other. We must look away from the differences until we penetrate into the Unity of the Whole. Love alone reveals love. Hate but hides the gleam.

God is distant to the unbeliever, unknown to those who are not acquainted with Him. The Spirit may court us, but if we would be wed, we must first be wooed. There is no marriage without both bride and bridegroom and mutual consent. The prophets of every age have declared the unity of God and man, but they have been among those who have "entered in." Dare we deny the reality of their experience, the truth of their message?

We would have peace, but we still persist in remaining in confusion. The one is the opposite of the other. Cosmos does not affiliate with chaos. Some find peace while others find only confusion. We shall yet learn that each finds what he is truly looking for.

If we would find the more abundant life, we must live more abundantly. Life cannot be separated from living, and whatever the nature of God or Life is, this nature must be one with our nature, else how could we be?

When we enter into the spirit of livingness, we enter into the Spirit of God, for Creator and creation are one. Life and animation are latent in all things. When the creative power of our imagination stirs this latent energy into action, there is a responding chord struck in our everyday experiences; we find we are surrounded by Life.

Truly did the great mystic proclaim that he is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto him. If God is Life, and if Life is God, and if God and Life are one and the same thing, how can

# New Foundations for Thinking

*The Universe may  
be impersonal as  
law and as essence,  
but It is forever  
personifying Itself.*

*It is revealed  
in creation.*

we expect to become conscious of immortality while we contemplate death? All are eternally alive unto the creative Spirit of the universe. The persistent urge to express is a continuous demand the original Life makes on us. It is God, the Essence, passing through the thinker into action.

How can we expect to find beauty if we contemplate only unloveliness? The God of beauty is understood by the artist who appreciates the beautiful and senses in all form some reflection of that universal Wholeness that finds harmony in the perfect adjustment of Itself to all of Its parts. Beauty, like greatness, is a thing of the soul, a spiritual quality, outlined in form, objectified in space. It is eternally imaged in the mind.

## Live From Truth

God must be Truth. The Universe could not lie to Itself. Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again. If we would understand God as Truth, we must be truthful. The lie is a mask, a masquerade. The irresistible desire which all people have to find the good life arises from an intuitive perception which already knows not only that God is, but that God is present with us.

The kingdom of heaven must be a state wherein one senses unity with Good, the unity of all people with Good. This kingdom is as distant from us as is our sense of

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isolation from it. It is as near to us as our belief and corresponding act will permit. The kingdom of heaven is not a place but a state of consciousness. God is not a person, but an essence, and man proclaims that this essence and atmosphere is personal, and so it is, but in this way — personal to us, through us.

Each person in this sense may approach Ultimate Reality and say, "To me, It is personal; through me, It is personified."

The sense of the necessity of some mediator between God and man finds its answer in the responsiveness of our own soul to the universal Perfection.

The mediator is our own belief, our own thought, our own conviction, our own action. As the mind cannot isolate itself from itself or separate itself from itself, so it cannot inject into itself a mind that is not itself or which is unlike itself, or that is other than itself. Hence it is written: "I myself am heaven and hell."

The mediator or savior who all people have felt a need of is already within. The only thing standing between the essence and atmosphere of the Spirit and Its personification through man, and in creation, is recognition. The fruits of right belief have always fallen from the tree of faith.

We need have no superstition about the results of prayer, faith or inner awareness. This is the way the Universe responds to us, and the response is in accord with Law, for the Universe is built on the action of immutable Law. How far or to what extent we may prove this depends on our ability to believe and to receive. ☸



*Where the Past Illuminates the Future*

*This feature is excerpted from "Think Your Troubles Away" by Ernest Holmes, August 1969 (copyright 1963 by Science of Mind Publications).*

*Find and enjoy the rest of this article, along with many other low-cost spiritual treasures, on the Science of Mind Archives & Library Foundation's website: **ScienceOfMindArchives.com**.*

## An Invitation to Our True Nature

As we enter the final month of 2021, we enter a time of reflection, metaphor and becoming, for it is deep in the dark winter months that renewal begins. And it begins with reflection on all that has been.

In our time and age, we may wonder about all that confronts us socially and collectively. The pandemic has not only lasted much longer than any of us anticipated, it has also challenged us more than we ever could have guessed. Relationships have been strained; the collective will to serve a common good has been tested and tried as it was in the time when Dr. Ernest Holmes wrote this month's feature. It seems we are living in a time of turmoil when both our outer and inner lives are in a state of confusion.

As we can see by reading Holmes' words from more than 60 years ago, our circumstances and the feelings we have about them are not as unique as we may think. Humanity has been here before and will likely be so again. It all serves to clarify what our role is in the midst of it.

Everything that seems to challenge us on the outside is but an invitation to investigate the nature of our relationship with the power on the inside. Consciousness is all there is, and it moves through an intelligent law to express itself as our experiences. As we journey with this awareness, we should remove from our consciousness any idea that God is a person. Holmes tell us that "God is not a person, yet God is more than a principle" In truth, God is what we make it, because God can only be reflected in the relationship we have with the Infinite Intelligence of the universe. God is our relationship with The Thing Itself.

As such, it is both the task and the dignity of human thought to inquire as to the quality of our relationship. If God is all there is, then why is it humanity seems to be on an eternal journey or quest?

The answer is all around us. Birds don't sign up for "discover your inner chirp" seminars. Trees don't long for the "healing your inner sapling intensive." We do that. Humanity forgets it can't be separated from the all. God can't be separated from Itself.

No matter what the conditions look like on the outside, that is a truth we must each make for ourselves. *Travel well.* ☸



**REV. DR. DAVID ALEXANDER**

is the spiritual director of Spiritual Living Center Atlanta. Find inspiration from him online at [RevDavidAlexander.com](http://RevDavidAlexander.com)



## Finding a Balance



### REV. JANE BEACH

was an atheist for the first 50 years of her life. Today, she is a minister, author and artist. Find her work at [Facebook.com/JaneBeach](https://www.facebook.com/JaneBeach).

My intention as a spiritual being having a human experience is to find a balance that honors all of me. When I think I don't know what to do, there's a part of me, an inner wisdom, that does know.

I balance my relationship with the spiritual me with my relationships with those around me, all of us doing the best we can with our human experiences. I'm here, in this time and space, to give my gifts, which helps me find balance. For instance, I have an unlimited reservoir of loving-kindness as a spiritual being, and I can offer that loving-kindness to others.

First, I treat myself kindly, and then it's easier to treat others kindly. Kindness to myself cuts through the stresses of the day to connect me to the divine love at the core of who I am.

When I'm kind to another, it feels good for both of us. A sincere response to a spoken word, email or post on social media lets the other person know they've been heard. One small kindness can make such a big difference.

As a spiritual being, peace is who I am. Humanly, when I'm at peace, the energy of my peace flows out into the world in ways I can't see but I know are real. Every time I pray, someone I've never met will feel it and be comforted. Every moment of peace, every prayer stretches across the universe to be felt by another.

Relationships offer continual opportunities to balance the spiritual me with the human me. During disagreements, it's so easy to want to "win," which can change a minor conflict into a major confrontation.

Choosing to be kind rather than right isn't copping out. Instead, it's opting for positive exchanges rooted in patience, peace, respect and the willingness to listen, treating the other person as I want to be treated.

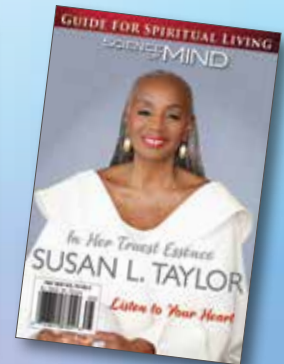
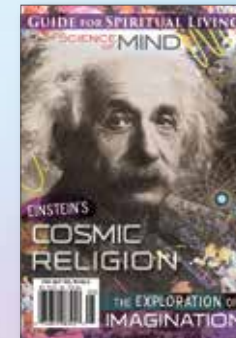
Kindness and inner peace are part of my spiritual makeup. I can access them, bringing them into my relationships, including my relationship with my human self. No wonder finding a balance feels good. ❧

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## Giving Grace



**REV.  
MASANDO  
HIRAOKA**

is the associate minister at New Thought Center for Spiritual Living in Lake Oswego, Oregon.

*Grace is a power that comes in and transforms a moment into something better.*

— CAROLYN MYSS

I think we all could use more grace these days. Something happens when I offer grace to myself or when someone else offers it to me. It's as if all the pressure, all the worry, all the anger, all the projection, all the blame — all the things I create mind trips over — gently lift off my shoulders and loosen up in my belly.

It's visceral, and in the place of all that tension, something else begins to emerge from within: the presence of peace, of a radically unconditional love — what I can only describe as the energy of the Divine.

Somehow these moments of grace bring me a sense of the fact that no matter what, the Divine — the real experience of It — is always

available, always right here. It can't be earned, bought or sold. It can't be manufactured or somehow conjured with a spell. It doesn't come because we are praying the right way, saying the right words or doing the right things to earn the love, peace and joy we seek.

It's so much more and at the same time so much simpler than that. It arrives often when we offer it to another. And it is enough.

It is a single breath that comes without strain. It is one instance of someone else offering kindness when we're not showing up as our best selves. It is forgiving and experiencing that forgiveness. It is a small but bright glimmer of hope arising from within.

These moments of grace are the moments when we simply remember who we are, when the inextricable connection to Spirit descends into our minds and hearts — when we can stand in awe of the ever-present good, even in the tumultuous year 2021.

We can be a conduit for grace by offering this type of unconditional love and forgiveness to each other, especially those we may think are undeserving of our love; especially for those who may have made us feel different or separate. Even a little bit of grace is a gift of the divine energy of the Universe Itself. ☸

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## Circulate Joyfully



**REV. DR.  
PATRICK  
CAMERON**

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*On a deeper level, you are already complete. When you realize that, there is a playful, joyous energy behind what you do.*

— ECKHART TOLLE

Joy is defined as a feeling of great pleasure and happiness. The world would have us believe that great pleasure and happiness are temporary and fleeting experiences, perhaps only for a few people under very select circumstances, or maybe those feelings are something we earn. If we let the outside world determine our state of being, we will be at the mercy and influence of random chance, spiraling in an endless cycle of opinions, emotions and concerns.

An awakened seeker of truth chooses what they give their attention to and where their thoughts and emotions will lead them. As the great teacher Jesus said, “Be *in* the world, but not *of* the world.”

Joy is who we *are*. Joy is at the core of every one of us! Joy is awaiting your invitation to come to the party that is your life, and you get to determine who’s on the guest list.

Joy awakened and lived from can become a central theme in a new spirituality that is arising within you. You can begin to shape your inner way of being to embody, develop and share a joyous energy in everything you think, do and say.

You can work with, affirm and share, “I am the place where joy shows up.” Your practice of joy will impact your physical health in amazing ways, too. Joy will lift you out of old concerns and biases and give new life to all of your relationships.

Joy is one of the symptoms of a sincere seeker of truth. It is love and beauty that help create the experience of reverence for all of life. It truly is a high spiritual practice, and it requires repetition. But your current habitual pattern required repetition, too, did it not?

Awaken joy this moment. Sit still in the invitation of joy and watch what happens, where you are guided, directed and inspired to be and give. You are the light of the world circulating one of Life’s most delightful qualities — joy. Let it shine! ☸

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# Rebirth of Wonder

Photo by 1,000 Words

*Winter Solstice Rituals of Light,  
Release, Gratitude and Generosity*

BY Karyl Huntley

As we approach the shortest day of 2021, the winter solstice, let's imagine something together. First, I invite you to mentally let go of your current responsibilities. In fact, read this article when you are alone and free of daily demands; put it aside for now, if necessary.

Ready? Let the busyness of this time of year melt into the background. Focus on what winter has always been about — darkness, cold, slowing down, introspection, expectation and waiting. Make sure you are cozy for this journey; wrap up. If you like, grab a cup of tea. Now, imagine traveling into the past about 4,300 years to what is now Great Britain.

Welcome to the beginning of the Bronze Age. Things are going to change rapidly with the coming of the Celts to mine the riches of the islands. But, for now, we find ourselves with a race of people that archae-historical-fiction writers call the Stargazers. We do not know their real name, and we have no written record of these people, but we have something else. These are the people who built the great stone circles and monuments, like Stonehenge.

Scientists agree that, whatever else these stone megaliths might have been, they were certainly heavenly observatories. The pattern of the stones is oriented to the sky to observe specific astronomical events linked to the seasons. All megalithic structures tell a similar story.

Imagine we tag along with a chief Stargazer on what would have been about December 23. He takes us to a particular spot before sunrise, and together we look through a particular set of stones in the holy circle and watch for the yellow ball to rise. We are fortunate because for these three sacred days prior to this sunrise, the skies have been clear and the Stargazer tells us that “the sun has stood still for three days now.”

Photo by Marti Bug Catcher



He is intently looking for something. When the first rays of the sun come over the horizon, he pauses, then he smiles and his shoulders drop. He looks at the rising point of the sun; he turns around and checks the shadow it makes, and is satisfied that the sun has reversed its course and will move south to shine ever stronger and longer until summer, that midpoint in the year when all the crops are assured, the required animals have survived and given birth, and the people will be able to live another year.

He accepts the miracle he has just witnessed and shares the good news with his village. Life is restored. Winter will pass. A new beginning is assured. Great celebration ensues. Rituals of gratitude are performed. The wonder of it all fills his clan.

Bring yourself back to your time and place and contemplate how you and I can experience this wonder at this time of year, because all that was true then is true now. We all wait for the assurance of a new beginning. All wisdom traditions have an essential component of light coming from darkness, an ending giving way to a new beginning, a way of releasing the past and being grateful for the blessings to come.

Dear Earth Being, I am going to offer you a way of celebrating this magical time of year and accomplishing all that the shift of the solstice brings, for that is what we are honoring — the winter solstice, the day of longest darkness giving way to the birth of the sun and new beginnings, just like every generation before us has celebrated in their own ways.

All peoples, everywhere, have created and participated in rituals within their family, cultural and religious traditions. I believe ritual enriches us and connects us with our ancestors, our breathing family members, the generations to come, the animals, the land, the heavens and our Source. I believe it deepens meaning for us and helps us make sense of the highs and lows of life. I believe people who have no connection or appreciation for ritual are impoverished in a way that hurts their humanity and their ability to live fully. That's how important it is.

Let us take some elements from the story of the Stargazers and apply them to our life in December 2021. It has been a year of challenge for us. There have been physical, emotional and financial difficulties for many of us. We have dealt with separation and judgment. We have loved and lost, tried and succeeded or failed, prayed and been fulfilled or disappointed. I imagine the Stargazers, with different issues from our own, could also have said the same. What we have at the solstice is a divine reset button.

### Winter Ritual

You can participate in this ritual alone, with your family or with a larger group, at a time of your choosing: solstice, Christmas, New Years — just sometime in the darkest part of the year. To begin, you must do what the sun seems to do at the time of the solstice. The word *solstice* means “the sun stands still.”

For about three days around the time of the longest darkness, the sun seems to rise and set at the same points on the horizon, before it begins its journey south. Begin by stilling yourself, slowing down, breathing, letting the stress go. Have these items ready for each person when you are ready to perform your ritual: some paper, writing instruments, a burning bowl, matches, a tall glass to house a white candle, a metallic pen that will write on glass and some object that has given you great comfort.

### Release

For our ancestors, the winter solstice meant the old year was dismissed; it was over. For some cultures this meant giving sacrifices. That idea is quite horrifying to contemplate today, but the idea of giving up something for a greater good resonates.

The first part of this ritual involves letting go. In your quiet state, write down what you are willing to release. It could be emotional states like worry, hatred, judgment or obsessive thoughts. It could be a relationship or a job. It could be actions that do not serve you, from negative tendencies to full-blown addictions.

Go through every area of your life and search for ways of being that do not serve you. You can let these go into the darkness. If you are performing this ritual with others, share as much as is comfortable, affirming that whatever needs and wants to be released may surely be released.

When you have completed this part, set fire to the papers, in a safe way, in the burning bowl, chanting, “Be gone. Be glad. Let go. Let be.” This releasing fire is your friend, just like the rising sun was to our ancestors. Fire is the element that instantly transforms what it touches, and if you believe that your solstice fire is working miracles for you, it can and will.





## Gratitude

How grateful do you imagine the people in the village of the Stargazer were when the news of the birth of the new sun was shared? It must have felt like a ticket to a new life, to the promise of spring, an affirmation that the overarching heavens and all their deities loved them. Gratitude brings light and love to the world, just like the solstice sunrise.

Using the metallic pen, write those blessings of life you are most grateful for on the glass casing of your candle. Write small so you can pour out all your gratitudes — people, ways of being, skills you have, miracles you have experienced, health, good of every nature.

Share these sweet things in your group and then light your candle. Notice how the light shines through your words, as if they were an illumined manuscript. Chant together, “Glory and grace. Blessing and thanks.” Be sure to burn your candle at times throughout the year to remind you of your blessings.

## Generosity

Every spiritual tradition teaches the giving of gifts at this time of year. I imagine that the giving of the light and the promise of another year would have been the greatest gift our ancestors could hope for, and it was always given.

Take up your comfort object — a photo, a blanket, a stuffed animal — and consider the gifts of comfort you received from your Source through this well-appreciated object.

When you truly, generously give with no strings attached, you are replicating the nature of your Source. Joy always follows.

Take up another piece of paper and write down gifts you can and will give the world in the coming year. How will you make the world a better place by giving your light? What can be given only by you?

Attach the piece of paper to your comfort object that you can refer to throughout the year. Chant with your group, “I live and give. I heal and help.” Conclude this ritual with some food — gifts from the Earth — together.

May the blessings and light of this season of wonder be upon you and yours. ☸



## We Are Already Wealthy

Prosperity, like many spiritual qualities, can feel paradoxical.

As spiritual beings we are already inherently at one with the infinite, eternal, abundant, intelligent nature of life itself. We are already enough. There is nowhere to go and nothing to do to be more worthy and holy.

And yet, because this unlimited Life is forever creating and progressing, there is always more to be revealed. We are always becoming. It is our delight to explore our individual expression of that One Life.

Creating a wealth vision for yourself, your family and your finances is a powerful tool for remembering your essential spiritual truth and directing your spiritual energy into the practical activities of work and money.

My beloved Bill and I first began our journey of developing a greater sense of wealthy living after we'd been married about a year and a half. We already had a friendly, functional approach to our finances, but it was becoming clear that something greater was possible.

We used the visioning practice to tune into the spiritual qualities we wanted to deepen. We asked, “What does a spiritually and financially wealthy and prosperous life mean for us?”

A wealth vision statement emerged and continues to guide us.

Our wealth vision is this: We are already wealthy. We consciously choose a life of abundance, passion and creativity. Our ideas and activities generate prosperity and joy and, therefore, serve all. In our loving partnership, cash flows, assets grow, and there's plenty of time and energy for everything.

For us, the remembrance of “we are already wealthy” anchors a sense of ever-present, invisible supply that never wavers. We get to participate in life by giving our gifts and receiving so much. Finally, it feels practical to claim that spiritual good shows up as things we need and want in the human condition, like cash flow and time.

In your journey of simultaneously becoming more of who you already are, include a reflection on how wealth reveals as you. ☸



**REV. KAREN RUSSO, MBA,** is the author of “The Money Keys” and the creator of Money Momentum Mastery.





# Continued Ascension

BY Jeffon Seely

*Photo by STLK*

Sitting in the sacredness of this moment, gazing out the window, my mind quiets and my inner eyes begin to see. While my conscious mind perceives what lies beyond the windowpane, my highest self observes the observer observing this physical world outside my home.

This space in time opens the doorway for a few transformational questions to flutter through my consciousness. These questions bring with them an invitation to explore, tap into and know something more about what it is we are.

These questions are as follows:

*Who am I? (Not just the human being called Jeffon, but who am I?)*

*Where am I going?*

*What am I using my time and energy to create?*

Each of these thoughts can act as a guidepost, leading us on this infinite journey of becoming.

## Who Am I?

Ask nearly any person who they are, and they'll respond with a name. This name they share is not just a collection of letters but also of thoughts, memories and beliefs that intertwine in such a way as to give life and meaning to those letters within a given name.

In fact, when I've been asked who I am, I'll typically go into a spiel about all the things that I think make me me. Born in Salt Lake City, raised by my mom and grandparents, half Black and half White, a speaker, businesses owner, family man and writer — all of these selective memories that perhaps have been unconsciously chosen by me to help shape the image I have of myself.

Think about it for a second: Who are you? What is your go-to answer? For me, there is a profound difference in my reply when I take time to really ask myself the question, "Who am I?"

What I know and believe to be true is the following: Yes, I was born in Utah, am biracial, a business owner and a family man, but these are but a small piece of the infinite of who I truly am. I am (we are) much more than that.

I was once a light that flickered in the sky — a star created by elements, gases and minerals that have been in existence from the inception of it all.

These eternal elements were brought to life by *the* Life, which is life and the space in which all of life resides. This golden thread of the Divine is woven throughout it all.

The Divine was in the formation of this planet, the waters that brush against the shore and the rivers that flow. It is within the trees and the winds that rustle the leaves. It was found in my ancient ancestors in all the unique places where their journeys began. It was found in the food they collected and ate.

This Energy gave rise to my ancestors in the continent of Africa before they were forced to the American South. It was found in the ancestors of my mother in Scotland. All of this energy and continued expression of life guided by that ever-present Energy gave rise to my mother, my father and ultimately me.

So when I ask myself who I am, the simplest answer I've found is: I am divine energy propelled by the Infinite.

Standing on this foundation, I recognize each person I pass is this, too. So when I interact with another being in any capacity, I am observing the Divine — not just a collection of letters that make up a name and a few selected memories a person decides to share. I am interacting with an infinite being.

That said, *every* interaction is a blessing. This realization is a pillar holding up the temple steps we walk on in our journey of becoming.

## Where Am I Going?

Aware and in tune with this Energy that empowers me and allows my consciousness and highest self to be, my next question is, "Where am I going?"

Think about all the ways you've answered this question or heard another person answer this question in the past.

Often when asked this, I tell people my intentions of whatever it is I am doing. I'm in the process of getting a degree, writing a new book, building my business, moving to a new location and starting a new profession. All of these responses from my perspective are future-facing.

While it is important to cast a vision and move forward in the pursuit of that vision, I've realized something much more powerful.

Where I am going has less to do with the days ahead and more to do with what I am choosing to do (and be) in this sacred moment of now. As I continue forward on this journey of becoming, I find it is not a miraculous transformation that will one day occur after all of these things I am seeking or hoping to do come to fruition. Instead, this journey of becoming is found in this present moment: What we do here and now is what we become.

While we may have a vision as to where we'd like to be or one day get to, the next step in the journey doesn't appear until we take a step. And each step on this journey reveals itself only in this present moment. I dare to say it is not just about this physical life and what we become in this existence, but on this eternal voyage, we are always on this journey of becoming.

There is no moving backward. It is a continuous pathway of unfoldment, non-dualistic, simply empowered by God, Source and the Infinite.

After all, what more could we become than what we already are? Where else could we be but in this moment of now?

## What Am I Using My Time and Energy To Create?

Equipped with the understanding that we are brought to life and fueled by the Infinite, embracing the realization that this journey of becoming is the very fabric of who we are and each passing moment is a glimpse into this eternal voyage, the next question is, "What am I creating?"

To answer this final question, we need not look any further than the effects we've brought about in our lives. These effects, things, materials and manifestations are in direct correlation with the level of conscious understanding of the prior two questions, "Who am I" and "Where am I going?"

What more could we become than what we already are? Where else could we be but in this moment of now?

## Continued Ascension

What I mean by this is that it is extremely easy for us to say we are one with the One. Saying that statement doesn't require any conscious ascension; anyone can do it.

It's easy for us to say we are guided by a power that empowers us — God or Source — and use that as a means to justify or accumulate more things, often at the expense of others.

However, if I truly believe I am empowered by Source and aware of this journey of becoming, would I not ensure I am living, manifesting, creating and showing up each day with compassion, peace, respect and acceptance for all the people, places and the Earth I am blessed to dwell upon?

Just as we are on our individual journey of becoming, you and I are also a part of the collective becoming here on planet Earth. As part of all humanity, we must play a conscious and active role in the collective becoming of our world.

This requires individual responsibility and a realization that we cannot hide beneath a blanket of spirituality, religion or worldly possessions to avoid the role we play in this process. We all are essential in creating a world that works for everyone.

What are you using your time and energy to create? How does it impact the people around you, the people in your community, state, nation and the world?

Does it help bring about more compassion, peace, acceptance, respect and human equality or does it push you (or people ahead of you) by holding others held back?

## Being

I slowly come back to a conscious awareness of the breath I am breathing, my heart that is beating and this moment. These questions allowed me to explore a deeper part of myself that connects us with the golden thread that runs through all.

On this journey, we are never alone, forever connected to the atoms, minerals, elements, people, planets, the sun and endless space around us. Look closely and you'll see yourself, the Infinite, flowing through it all.

Continued ascension is the path. ☸

## TIMELESS WISDOM IN TODAY'S WORLD

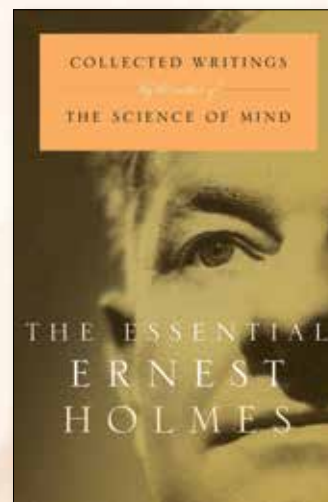
This class delves into all of Ernest Holmes' works, feasting on his quiet, devotional writings as well as his impassioned teaching for future leaders. His love of people — and his ability to see past their problems into the heart of their eternal beings — blend modern psychology with humankind's limitless ability to choose what to think and feel, and therefore make powerful changes in their lives.

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## Who Am I?



**MARK WALDMAN** (from Loyola Marymount University) and **ANDREW NEWBERG, M.D.** (Jefferson University Hospital) are world renowned for their neuroscientific research on spirituality and consciousness. Waldman's latest book is "Neuro Wisdom: The New Brain Science of Money, Happiness and Success."



Philosophers and spiritual leaders, for thousands of years, pondered the question, "Who am I?" They proposed thousands of answers without finding a unifying thread.

Plato, in the 4th century BCE, saw humans as immaterial immortal substances. Descartes, in the 17th century, concluded that our thinking mind ultimately defines who we are. And in the early 20th century, philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein argued that "we" don't actually exist at all and that the boundaries between self and other are arbitrary.

Similarly, every religious tradition has explored this question, asking if the individual and God are one or whether they are intertwined entities.

Psychologists have also used this question as a tool to help people discover their passion, purpose and inner essence. But there are those who find the question maddening because there doesn't seem to be a single answer, a view that was echoed by philosopher Immanuel Kant, who believed it was impossible to know what the essential "I" might be. In 1769, historian and philosopher David Hume said that we are bundles of perception, a view supported by neuroscience research showing that our self-identity and sense of self are constructed in different parts of the brain.

In a brain scan study published in the January 2020 journal *Neuroimage*, researchers demonstrated that our sense of self involves a

simultaneous integration across the following brain systems: our imagination/default network, our conscious thinking/executive network and a frontal/parietal/temporal network that gives us a sense of where our body is in space and time, along with the ability to consciously select words to describe who we think we are.

Simply put, our self-identity is not fixed. It is a constantly changing mixture of imagination and creativity we can use to seek out

rewarding experiences. There is no single "I" or "me" because we are a vast collection of multiple identities working together.

Like masks, we pick different ones to represent ourselves to different people in different situations. They, too, are wearing different masks chosen to convey their inner emotions and desires. So when we ask ourselves, "Who am I?," we heavily rely on our creative imagination to construct a self-image that reflects our thoughts and feelings as they occur in the present moment.

Here is an easy way to demonstrate your multiple selves. Close your eyes and deeply relax, then write down the first thought that comes to mind when you ask, "Who am I?" Now ask the same question 20 more times and write down 20 different words or phrases you feel accurately describe your unique essence. Look at your list and ask if there is a single quality that captures who you actually are.

Here's an example of the first 12 things that came to my mind when I did this exercise: *I'm a writer. A teacher. I'm insecure. I'm happy. Satisfied. I'm alive. I am. I am not my thoughts. I am conscious, but consciousness is an illusion. I don't know what I am or who I am. I am everything and nothing. I am kind.*

When you think about it, you may discover your list can go on forever. Your identity is not carved in stone. Every year, every decade will reflect a different quality of who you are and what you may become. In fact, everything on your list reflects one small aspect of your personality. Different qualities will emerge depending on the context you are in. Your entire personality and behavior change in every situation that unfolds.

Now try this experiment: Delve into your spiritual practice, think deeply about those beliefs and see what answers emerge when you contemplate the question, "Who am I?"

If you stay in a meditative state and gaze at your growing list, you can easily conclude that you are all those qualities and none of them. They are all products of your imagination, creativity, desires, memories and fears. They aren't real, but they are potentially useful — a wide range of neurological scenarios you can choose from to achieve goals and avoid mistakes.

Our brain scan studies show you can also enter deep states of "relaxed mindful awareness" to bring you into the present moment where you can witness how all these self-adhered labels are constantly floating around in the daydreaming part of your mind.

If you go deeper, your sense of self can briefly disappear as activity in your parietal lobes (where *you*, *me* and *we* are constructed) slows down. In that sacred space, you and I can simply be with each other without judgment, bias or even belief as we surrender the illusionary sense of self. ☸

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## SPIRITUAL PARENTING

### What Family Means

The holiday season always brings up memories and connections to our families. Whether the stories are good or bad, we all have our stories, and the family is the place where they live. The holidays bring those stories to life. At the dinners, celebrating the traditions, visiting the homes of relatives — we can feel the vibrations of the stories. And we do our best to stay in the present moment as we experience the pull of the past.

Our families of choice, which we have gathered around us during our life's journey, can often be our greatest connection to the true feeling of family. These are the people who help us feel most at home, where we can relax and be ourselves. What a great gift it is to have a sacred mixture of good friends and family in our constellation during the holidays. That's what we came here to do, I think — to expand our families and show love to more people.

And this year, after all we have experienced together, I think it's important to celebrate with our families — whoever and wherever they are — like never before. Being surrounded by uncertainty, it is more important than ever to have something and someone we can count on. That's what a family means: people we can count on and who can count on us.

Let's see if we can add more people to our family this season. What a great gift to open our hearts more and celebrate life with each other. A sense of family is rising in us all as we see our planet changing. Like it or not, we're *all* family now.

What will be the gift we give our children this holiday season? What will be their memory of the holidays in this strange year of questions without answers?

I hope they will look back and say it felt like they were a part of a tightly connected family this year. I hope they will recall how the family pulled together to make the holidays special. I hope they will remember their family being a part of a larger community.

It's great gift to give and receive, to let someone into your family or to be welcomed in by another. Let's give *that* gift this year. ☸



**REV. DR.  
BARRY EBERT**

is an associate minister and the youth director at Mile Hi Church in Lakewood, Colorado.



## Breathe Into Anxiety



**MOLLY KATE BROWN,**

**FNP-BC,** is an award-winning author, a transformational coach and an integrative nurse practitioner working with consciousness medicine in her practice Suniasol Integrative Mental Health. Connect at MollyKateBrown.com.

Anxiety is a state that results from *perceived* stress. In times of old, the stress or fight-or-flight response kept us alive and increased our chances of survival. Today, however, many have a chronic underlying state of anxiety that leads to an increased risk of death.

Chronic anxiety increases heart rate and blood pressure, adversely impacts the immune system and increases chances of developing chronic medical conditions including gastrointestinal disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome, heart disease and a host of respiratory conditions.

Often, there are definite physical sensations in the chest or abdomen that accompany the state of anxiety. These sensations are an invitation to address the anxiety without the need for medications. The state of anxiety can be amplified because we haven't learned how to maintain awareness on these uncomfortable physical sensations. Instead, the mind bounces from them into self-perpetuated mental anxiety spins that are a negative downward spiral.

Instead, find a quiet space where you can be still. Focus your attention on the place where the contraction, tightness or other sensations are felt — the chest, the belly. Breathe into it. Keep awareness on that area. Drop all story or mental content associated with the feelings. Don't

analyze or explain them to yourself. Just breathe into it and be with it. By so doing, the sensations become less anxiety-invoking, and the need to bounce from them into a mental spin diminishes. We are courageous warriors who are vastly stronger than we believe.

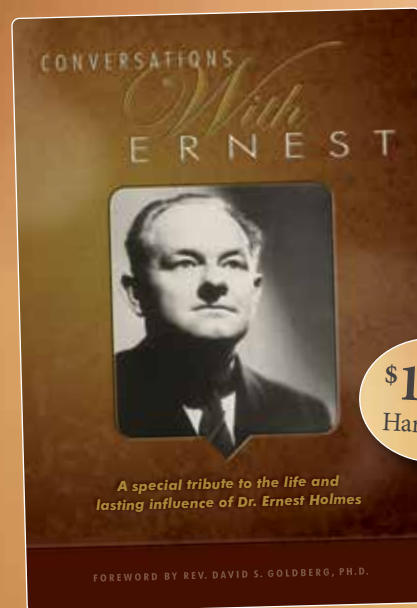
It is also helpful to go outside for a walk. Research suggests that a short walk after a period of mindfulness significantly reduces anxiety. The Earth's healing balm has also been shown to work wonders for feelings of anxiety. Our modern lifestyle has separated us from frequent exposure to the earth's primordial flow of electrons. Coming into direct contact with them with the bare skin has been shown to decrease anxiety and improve mood.

Let us help ourselves. Let us call upon our strength, our inner guidance, and the wisdom of the earth to aid in our healing, in our unwinding. ❀

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# MEDIA REVIEWS

## THE SPACE IN BETWEEN: AN EMPATH'S FIELD GUIDE

**Signe Myers Hovem** | *She Writes Press* | Paperback \$16.95

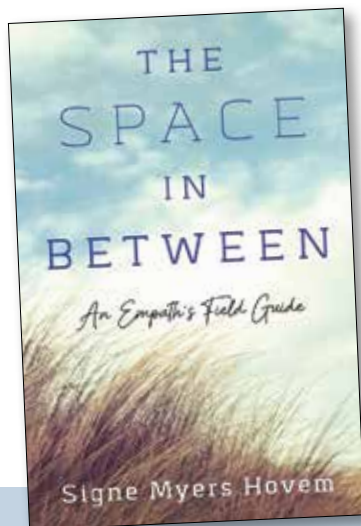
If you ever wondered what separates being an empath from being empathetic, you might find some guideposts in Signe Myers Hovem's book "The Space In Between." In it, she argues that being empathic "doesn't instantly elevate you to being a spiritual, pathetic or compassionate person." Rather, she writes, "Being empathic is a personal journey that challenges what you sense and feel, as well as your sense of belonging.

She breaks her book into five areas she calls fields: reflection, definition, sensing, experience and mystery. These five fields of consciousness, these five different landscapes, guided her own path of discovering her empathic sensitivities.

Each chapter offers insights from Hovem's own experiences and extensive research, as outlined in her bibliography. At the end of each chapter are questions for reflection, encouraging readers to examine their own sensitivities and cultural or familial themes.

If, for example, you are interested in examining ways to create balance in your life, she suggests you reflect on how you might pick up the feelings of others, how you might look at your experiences to see if they affected you emotionally or empathically.

This book can serve as a guidebook for dismantling long-held beliefs and finding an intentional balance. Hovem specifically uses it to reach people who identify as highly sensitive, empathic or as empaths. She believes empaths are made, not born, and she believes those who wish to explore the world of the empath must honor their own wisdom and "embrace a wholeness that only comes from being comfortable in your own skin. ☸



Study the five fields of consciousness and manage your unique empathic sensitivities.

# MEDIA REVIEWS

## THE ILLUSION OF LIFE AND DEATH

**Clare Goldsberry** | *Monkfish Book Publishing* | Paperback \$16.99

The overarching message from Clare Goldsberry is succinct: "Embrace life. Embrace death. Learn how to live well, and you will know how to die well."

Or as she puts it in other words: "We do not know how to die because we do not know how to live."

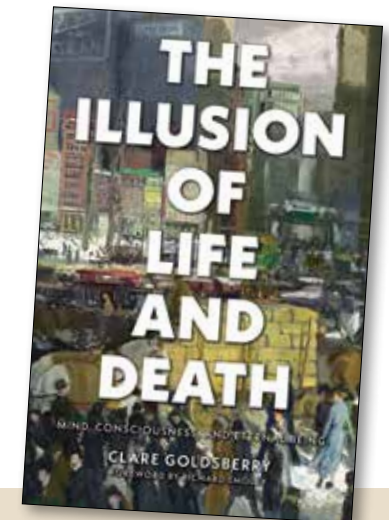
What the global pandemic brought into sharp relief is our culture's unwillingness, inability to prepare for and understand dying. Goldsberry offers a personal view that expands to intertwine teachings from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and what she calls "Ageless Wisdom Teachings." She examines ideas from Buddha to Plato, modern-day quantum physics to traditional Christian teachings.

This book appeals to readers interested in karma, reincarnation, sufferings, conscious living, non-attachment versus detachment and understanding reality. She discusses dying with grace and dignity. She delves into issues around suicide. She even examines the business of illness and the costs of keeping someone alive.

After the death of her partner of 10 years, Goldsberry leaned on all she learned throughout his extended illness and death to understand the dying process. "I've concluded," she writes, "that a good death is one in which we get to die on our own terms, embracing the process and the inevitability that all beings who are born must die. A good death is a death without fear, without clinging to the material world and without anger."

This book will leave you with more courage to face our own mortality in an approach that marries extensive research with personal experience, offered with compassion and hope. ☸

— JULIE MIERAU



Intrigued by karma, reincarnation, conscious living and understanding reality? Crack open this bold book.



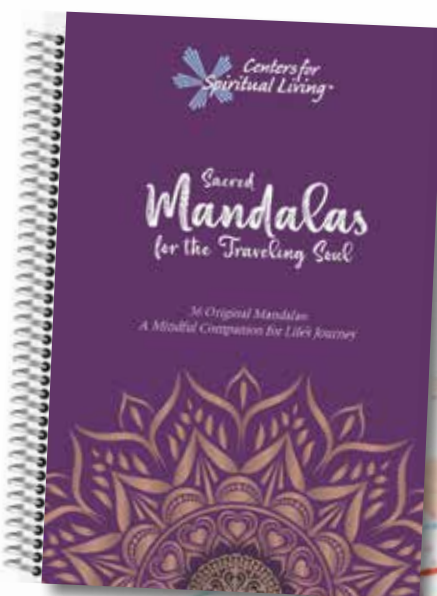
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## The Middle: A Place of Possibility

*Long ago my family decided to keep political and racial viewpoints out of the conversation when we get together. But the COVID-19 vaccine is blowing us up. My brother says all “anti-vaxxers” are stupid, selfish or making a political statement. My son decided not to be vaccinated. I love and respect them both. But now they won’t come to family Christmas. It feels like judgment and hate have poisoned my family. I’m caught in the middle. Any ideas how to keep family from coming apart? Aren’t we all in this together?*



**STEF SWINK, RScP**, has been a practitioner since 1999. As protégé and assistant to Louise Hay, she was a frequent ghostwriter for the “Dear Louise” column. Through speaking, spiritual counseling and workshops, she inspires others to create fulfilling lives they love. Connect with her online at [StefSwink.com/Ask-Stef-Submission](http://StefSwink.com/Ask-Stef-Submission).

The intensity level and duration of fear, uncertainty, stress and anxiety we’ve been collectively experiencing is significant. We are all in this together, and we are weary. When our very survival feels threatened — be it by an invisible virus, the continuation of violence and war, or the obvious evidence of climate change — our “normal” civility can begin to break down.

When upset and overwhelmed, meditation and prayer are often forgotten. Recommit to your daily spiritual practice and speak your word, denying that hate and intolerance has any power in your family. When you stay grounded in your connection with Spirit, you can be the example and nexus of unconditional love instead of fear-based reaction.

The heated vaccine topic seems to have the power to separate and divide. Being in the middle is hard, but it is also a space of possibility. Ask your brother and son if they are willing to explore creative ways to feel safe to come together. Share with family members that even when you disagree, it is important to find a mutually supportive path forward through this difficult time. Whatever their responses, practice acceptance and respect, over and over.

I believe in the incredible transformational power of love in each of us. I also believe that those of us whose immediate survival is relatively secure must use that luxury to intentionally lift the vibration of consciousness on this planet. Lovingly nurture yourself and do the same for your family, community and the whole of humanity. You can do this. We can do this. Let’s do it together. And Merry Christmas. ❧





Plum Village



### *A Global Community of Mindfulness Centers*

Plum Village advances the work of mindfulness through retreats and online gatherings focused on the teachings of Engaged Buddhism and the art of mindful living. Founded by Thich Nhất Hạnh in 1980s as a small, rustic farmstead, Plum Village today is Europe's largest Buddhist monastery. More than 200 resident monks and nuns live in four hamlets spread out across the French countryside.

This is where Thầy, as his followers call him, built his dream of a beloved community — a healthy, nourishing environment where living in harmony with each other is the ultimate goal. Plum Village weaves Thầy's instructions in mindfulness into all daily activities, whether eating, walking, working or visiting. Each day includes periods of silence, sitting meditation, rest, mindful work and play.

Thousands of meditation practitioners from across the globe travel each year to the village to experience the art of mindful communal living. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in keeping with travel guidance from health experts, these gatherings take place online, expanding the virtual community of people from more than 40 nations.

Before returning to his native Vietnam, Thich Nhất Hạnh lived at Plum Village, where he wrote, taught, gardened and guided his global community. Many of the trails around the hills and fields are legendary paths of walking meditation for Thầy and his community.

Shortly after his exile from Vietnam in the 1970s, Thầy founded the Sweet Potato Community that since became Plum Village. He has since founded eight additional monastic practices centers in Europe, the United States and Asia. Learn more online at **[PlumVillage.org](https://PlumVillage.org)**. ☸



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