

Volume 13 Number 4
April 2019



unity
Spiritual Center

Sun



Board Report —Easter Services

April Classes

WAYNE W. DYER

Bestselling author of
Your Erroneous Zones

Your
Sacred Self

More than 500,000 copies sold

Making the Decision to Be Free

Your Sacred Self—Wednesdays 10:30am and 6pm

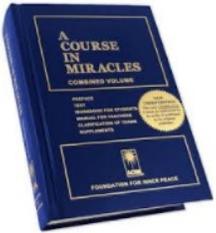
The book Rev. Sharon is facilitating is by Dr. Wayne W. Dyer. This book is an inspiring, hopeful, illuminating guide that can help everyone live a happier, richer, more meaningful life.

Participation in this class will assist you in living each day, regardless of what you do, with a greater sense of peace and fulfillment. You will develop a sense of satisfaction with yourself and others, along with further development of a deeper sense of your sacred self. Come join our class.

This class is offering a step-by-step program that helps you establish a spiritually-oriented, rather than an ego-oriented, approach to life. Step by step, the class will show you how to progress from emotional awareness, to psychological insight, to spiritual alternatives in creating a life of awareness of yourself as divine.

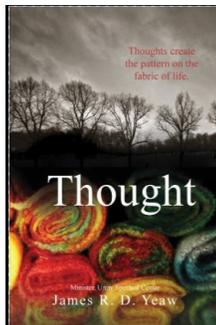
A Course in Miracles Tuesdays at 10:30am

The Course in Miracles group meets every Tuesday at 10:30 am. The class began at the start of the book on October 2. Each week they continue from where they left off the week before. Everyone is welcome to attend this class and join in the discussion of the chapter of the week. Some consider the Course the most important spiritual document for our lifetime. After completing each chapter, the study group will listen to recordings from the world's foremost teacher of the Course, Ken Wapnick, Ph. D.



Thought: A Guide for Healing

Sundays 9am with Rev Jim—also at RISE on Wednesdays



Thought: A Guide for Healing – Rev. Jim 9am Sundays

“There is no physician like cheerful thought for dissipating the ills of the body. There is no comforter to compare with goodwill for dispersing the shadows of grief and sorrow. To live continually in thoughts of ill will, cynicism, suspicion and envy, is to be confined in a self-made prison. But to think well of all, to be cheerful with all, to patiently learn to find the good in all—such unselfish thoughts are the very portals of heaven. To dwell day by day in thoughts of peace toward every creature will bring abounding peace to their processor.” ~ James Allen, As a Man Thinketh

It is important not just to think, but understand your thought; understand where it comes from. Are you helping or hurting yourself with self-imposed thought? It is certain those with the greatest measure of an abundant life among us are their own best friends, and the ones who struggle most are their own worst enemies.

This book is a practical discussion to discovering and healing your thoughts. Use the principles, use the exercises, practice mindfulness and you will be amazed as you arise out of stinkin' thinkin'.

Rev. Kim O'Conner will return to our class schedule in May.

unity[®]
Spiritual Center

We're on the Web at
www.unitysc.org

Ministers

Rev. Sharon L. Bush
Rev. James Yeaw, D. Div.
Rev. Lei Lanni Burt
Rev. Kim O'Connor

Center Administrator

Cathy Collins

Director of Music

Mollie Kidari
Melvin Johnson, Choir Director

Board of Trustees

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Tuesday through Thursday
8:30am to 5pm
Sunday 9am to 1pm
www.unitysc.org
www.facebook.com/UnitySCAZ

Belief is Powerful



Recently I was asked why we say “and so it is” at the end of our prayers. Amen means, “and so it is”, so we say Amen for Unity Spiritual Center as we affirm our vision for the future of our spiritual family. We know that the change in spiritual leadership will be a positive

blessing for us all. We believe that God is guiding the process.

In Matthew 8:13, Jesus says, “Go the way and as thou hast believed be it done unto thee.” Our beliefs create our lives. What we believe to be true for us will come to pass. As I prepare our home to list with a realtor, I am focused on how my faith and my belief, both in God and in the goodness of humankind, has grown in the last twelve years, because each of you has touched my heart and changed my life.

I find many wonderful memories of entertaining in our home. I recall the Fourth of July All church Picnic where more than fifty of us gathered to enjoy the pool, the food and each other. I have special thoughts of the many Chaplains who gathered here to celebrate the joy of serving in the prayer ministry. Also, the fun times each December when I prepared a meal for our Board of Trustees to thank them for their time and talent in serving in leadership.

I am not sure what our future will unfold to look like in the next couple of years. I know that both Rev. Jim and I will still serve in a spiritual capacity, however neither one of us knows what that will look like. We do believe that God is calling us to serve in a new and different way. Just as our spiritual community does not know who Spirit is leading to serve as your minister. What I do know is that it is all good.

Belief is powerful, what we believe will come to pass. We have the choice to select what we want to believe. Frank Lloyd Wright put it succinctly, “The thing always happens that you believe; and the belief in a thing makes it happen.” Our beliefs can take us to great heights, or they can keep us mired in doubt and unhappiness.

There is a story of a farmer who was weeding a pumpkin patch when he happens upon an empty jug.

Seeing a small pumpkin sprouting next to the jug the farmer pushes the young pumpkin into the mouth of the jug and continues his hoeing.

At harvest time, the farmer again finds the jug and looks inside to see that the pumpkin has grown into the exact size and shape of the jug. The pumpkin, confined by its glass container, couldn’t grow beyond its limitations. Our lives are like the pumpkin, we develop beliefs about ourselves and our world and we then grow only so far as our beliefs will allow.

The word “belief” is defined as “a strongly held opinion.” Beliefs are opinions that we cling to as fact. For thousands of years it was not an opinion that the world was flat, it was a fact because people believed so strongly in this idea.

Take a look at what you have considered to be facts about yourself, your opportunities, your environment and your potential. Then consider what Mark Twain wrote, “What gets us into trouble is not what we don’t know. It’s what we know for sure that just ain’t so.” Dare to question your beliefs. Dare to consider that your beliefs are just opinions; thoughts you have held to be true.

Growing up, we heard things about ourselves that we came to believe as facts, but they were, in truth, only opinions. If you are naturally a passionate person, people might have told you that you were too dramatic, and you believed them. If you are thoughtful and introverted, other may have labeled you as shy. These labels, that are the opinions of others, can become beliefs that we have taken ownership of about ourselves and they may have limited our fullest expressions.

Our emotions and our feelings are affected by our beliefs. If we feel angry, sad or resentful it may be because we have adopted beliefs about ourselves and our lives that somewhere deep inside, we know to be false. Our feelings are our guides to uncovering these myths we have adopted to be factual and to opening ourselves to new truths.

When we are feeling unworthy or unlovable, it is hard for us to know God. The connection to God we experience is a feeling, an innate one-

What Is Unity? by Lowell Fillmore



I suppose that the question most often asked me is "What is Unity?" I find that trying to answer this question meaningfully is an interesting challenge.

I believe that Unity can make one's life an adventure, because Unity arouses interest in our spiritual nature. It whets our desire to find out what our true relationship with God is. It poses

questions to which we must seek understandable answers.

Unity tells us that our minds are our connecting links with God and that if we are to control our spiritual growth and unfoldment, we must control our thinking. Such statements are highly motivating to that part of the intellect which seeks answers.

In this world of seeming turmoil, conflict, and unrest, Unity affirms the bold statement: "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). To some, this may sound implausible, but it certainly makes one curious to find out the basis on which such a statement can be made.

Unity says that other spiritually illumined people—ministers, priests, or religious teachers—can help one get started on the right path for finding God, but ultimately each person must find God individually. In other words, Unity says that true religious growth is a "do-it-yourself project." Others can help you find a beginning; books and lessons can get you started by pointing you in the right direction, but if you truly want to know God, you must become acquainted with God yourself.

Unity does not emphasize formal membership and has never been preoccupied with gaining converts merely for the sake of numbers. In fact, Unity says that one can subscribe to its teachings and still retain membership in any other church. Unity's viewpoint is that there need be no conflict of religious beliefs. Unity believes that there is good in every religion and that we should keep our minds open in order to find the good when an opportunity is presented. In keeping with this attitude, people of various religions the

world over find good in the practical Christian principles taught and promulgated by Unity. Unity has no strict creed or dogma. One might describe Unity as a religious philosophy with an "open end," seeking to find God's truth in all of life, wherever it may be.

What Do We Believe?

God gave us freedom of choice. Unfortunately, we have used this freedom to bind ourselves in chains of ignorance. As individuals, we have thrown up walls of self-incrimination and guilt in our consciousness, thus cutting ourselves off from the abundant good that God has for us. Collectively, people have built up false beliefs about sin, sickness, and death, causing us to lose sight of the true meaning of life, which is that we are all children of God. As such, it is our privilege, in fact our very mission, to be heirs to God's kingdom.

Unity tells us that the number and seriousness of our past mistakes do not matter to God. God holds no grudges and has no account book. For those of us who have gone astray, who have wandered down the wrong pathway, Unity says that there is no depth to which we can sink where God cannot find us, that God is ever ready to give us a helping hand if we sincerely wish to be lifted up.

Unity teaches us that there is a divine law of prosperity, by means of which we can avail ourselves of the riches of the kingdom of heaven. By getting in rhythm with "the law of giving and receiving," as it is often called, we can demonstrate unlimited supply to meet all our needs. The secret is that we must learn to become open, receptive, responsive, and obedient to the law in order to make ourselves channels for the inflow and outflow of God's good.

Unity assures us that if just one person has learned the secret of successful living, then anyone can because "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34 KJV).

Unity is an adventure because it teaches us how to pray affirmatively. Our prayer ministry, Silent Unity, has been answering requests for prayer from around the world since 1890. A group of dedicated people is in prayer 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Have they learned how to help other people pray? I wish you could see the thousands of testimonials Silent Unity receives!

April 2019 Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
	1	2 10am Tai Chi 10am—Circle of Prayer 10:30am A Course in Miracles 10:30am AA 6pm Choir	3 10:30am—Your Sacred Self—Rev. Sharon 1pm—Al-Anon 1pm—"Thought" @ RISE—Rev. Jim 6pm—Your Sacred Self—Rev. Sharon
7 9am—Thought: A Guide for Healing - Rev Jim 10:30am—Necessity of Inclusiveness—Rev. Jim 11:45am—Fellowship Potluck (A-D Serve) 12:30pm—Ministerial Search Committee	8	9 10am Tai Chi 10am—Circle of Prayer 10:30am A Course in Miracles 10:30am AA 6pm Choir	10 10:30am—Your Sacred Self—Rev. Sharon 1pm—"Thought" @ RISE—Rev. Jim 1pm—Al-Anon 6pm—Your Sacred Self—Rev. Sharon
14 9am—Thought: A Guide for Healing - Rev Jim 10:30am—Protestors, Palm Sunday—Rev. Sharon 11:45am—Goin' Away Party—(E-K and others) Serve	15	16 10am Tai Chi 10am—Circle of Prayer 10:30am A Course in Miracles 10:30am AA 6pm Choir	17 10:30am—Your Sacred Self—Rev. Sharon 1pm—"Thought" @ RISE—Rev. Jim 1pm—Al-Anon 6pm—Your Sacred Self—Rev. Sharon
21 8am—Easter in the Garden 9am—Easter Brunch 10:30am—Easter Celebration Service 11:45am—Fellowship Potluck—(L-O Serve)	22	23 10am Tai Chi 10am—Circle of Prayer 10:30am A Course in Miracles 10:30am AA 6pm Choir	24 10:30am—Your Sacred Self—Rev. Sharon 1pm—Al-Anon 1pm—"Thought" @ RISE—Rev. Jim 6pm—Your Sacred Self—Rev. Sharon
28 9am—Thought: A Guide for Healing - Rev Jim 10:30am—Creating Our Own Realities- Rev Jim 11:45am—Fellowship Potluck—(P-ZServe) 12 Noon—Singles Planning Meeting 12:30pm—Easter Consciousness—Rev. Jim 12:30—USC Board Meeting	29	30 10am Tai Chi 10am—Circle of Prayer 10:30am A Course in Miracles 10:30am AA 6pm Choir	

Office Closed

	Thu	Fri	Sat
	4 9am Chair Yoga 10:30am AA 2pm Blossoming Depression Support Group 7pm OA	5	6 11:30 Women of Spirit
	11 9am Chair Yoga 10:30am AA 2pm Blossoming Depression Support Group 7pm OA	12	13
	18 9am Chair Yoga 10:30am AA 2pm Blossoming Depression Support Group 7pm OA	19 6pm Good Friday Service	20
	25 9am Chair Yoga 10:30am AA 2pm Blossoming Depression Support Group 7pm OA	26	27
	April Birthdays 4—Margery Beaty 5—France Allion, Norma Dickson & Georgia Feiste 7—Sidney Massey 11—Catherine Campeau, Betty Jo Johnson 12—Paul Martodam 14—Kalika Graesser 16—Eldon Clark 17—Sandy Galloway 22—Nancy Chenoweth 24—Rev. Sharon Bush 27—Shirley Bangert, Shirley Compau 28—Tom Lyle		

Board Report



There are two applicants for the open position of minister at Unity Spiritual Center. Watch this space for information about the Ministerial Selection Process. In addition to the Board of Trustees, the following congregants are participating in the selection

process: Mackey Essary, David Krause, Paul and Linda Martodam, Paula Mumm, and Joan Welch.

Rev. Sharon Connors of Unity of Carlsbad is being reviewed by the team. Rev. Connors has served Unity ministries in Gainesville, Florida; San Francisco, California; Unity Village Chapel in Missouri; El Cajon, California and Carlsbad, California since her ordination in 1987. Her current ministry in California, her video streaming and other information about Rev. Sharon can be found at www.unitychurchofcarlsbad.org.

Other resumes are also being considered and will be evaluated. The board will be meeting in a special session on March 31st and April 7th to consider candidates.

The selection procedure involves a review of a resume and film/streaming of a Sunday Service; a Skype interview; and an invitation to visit Unity Spiritual Center where a service and a workshop is presented. The congregation will also evaluate those presentation and will have an opportunity to visit with the candidate.

When a offer for a ministerial contract is made by our Board of Trustees, details will be announced as to a start date as well as the transfer of responsibilities from our present ministers.

Rev. Jim and Rev. Sharon have committed to be in leadership here through at least June 1. A special celebration in their honor will be held on Sunday, April 14 at 11:30am.

We will be also searching for a part-time full-charge bookkeeper who will also train in the duties of our Center Administrator, Cathy Collins. We will be asking for volunteers to manger book sales and produce newsletters.

Principles of Tithing

by Lavonne Rasmussen

My first lessons around giving came from my father. A regular churchgoer, one Sunday he was ill and unable to attend. He handed me an envelope and asked me to put it in the offering plate for him "so the church can keep its lights on," he said. It was a responsibility he took seriously and passed that sense of duty on to me. For many years my husband and I regularly 'pledged' to the Lutheran church we attended. We saw pledging as our duty, although not anything we looked forward to. Thirty-five years ago we wandered into a Unity church and our lives changed forever. Many new practices took front and center in our lives, among them the concept of tithing. At first this was a scary prospect. With three young children, we had to watch our expenses carefully. 'Giving away' 10% of our income seemed impossible. Fortunately, the minister of our new Unity church explained that we need not start with that 10% figure. Consider, he said, what % you are comfortable giving and add to that 1%. Get out of your comfort zone just a little bit. And when that becomes comfortable, add another %. That wasn't his only suggestion. Give to the source of your spiritual growth! If it is your church, give there. If a server at your favorite restaurant inspires you, give to that person. If it is a book you read, send the author a check! That was certainly a new concept! Rather than an obligation, tithing was an opportunity to enter the flow of giving and receiving. Since we began on this new tithing adventure our life has been joyously prosperous in so many ways. I would like to share with you my seven principles of tithing.

Calculate the % of your income that you feel comfortable investing in your spiritual growth. Then add 1%. Get a little bit out of your comfort zone.

Give to the source of your spiritual unfoldment. Give with an open and joyful heart. You are now entering the flow of prosperity unbounded!

Bless your gift and the receiver. I had a friend long ago who is no longer on this earth plane who wrote out her checks very consciously. She always wrote in that blank space on the bottom left of her check, *Thank You*. Always keep in mind

the blessings you receive as you give your gift.

Release- It is human nature to look over one's shoulder to see what will come your way. Perhaps you have something special in mind that you are hoping for or perhaps you just want to see the cash available to pay those bills that are piling up. Spirit is not Santa Claus. Be assured that you have entered the flow and your prosperity will follow in ways that you have never dreamed. It is not up to you to orchestrate your future. Release and let go.

Receive -It seems that it would be natural to accept the gifts that come your way but truly this can be a stumbling block to some. Feelings that 'I don't deserve it' creep into our consciousness. Or we didn't ask for *that!* Or, 'now my life will change. Am I ready for this? It is time to open your heart and your hands and receive!

Say Thank You-This is obvious. We have taught this as children, haven't we? And yet this is not just a perfunctory ritual. This is the step that leads you to more and more and more! Always receive with a grateful heart and willing hands.

Repeat

Financial Statement

Two Months—ending February 28, 2019

Income		
Sunday Contributions	\$	14,522.00
Less 10% tithe	\$	(1,452.20)
Other Income	\$	<u>8,678.70</u>
Net Income	\$	<u>21,748.50</u>
Less Expenses	\$	<u>(37,899.88)</u>
Net Operating (Loss)	\$	<u>(16,151.38)</u>
Interest Income	\$	18,016.11
Less 10% Tithe	\$	<u>(1,801.62)</u>
Operating Income	\$	<u>63.11</u>
Designated Income	\$	<u>625.00</u>
Less Designated Expense	\$	<u>-</u>
Net Income	\$	<u>688.11</u>

12th Anniversary of Prayer Chaplains at USC!



During our lives, we have many teachers and one teacher that Rev. Jim and I are very thankful for is Rev. Lei Lanni Burt. In the spring of 2007, Rev. Lei Lanni came to Unity School of Christianity and spent three days with our soon to graduate ministerial class.

She introduced us to her Unity Ministry called Light and Love Ministries. She presented her Prayer Chaplain Train the Trainer Workshop, which is designed to teach specific skills and core competencies to equip ministers, licensed teachers and lay leaders to train prayer chaplains and administer the Chaplain program within a ministry.

Rev. Sharon loved the training and as soon as she arrived at Unity Spiritual Center, she set the intention to start the program here. In January 2008, she conducted the first Prayer Chaplain training based on Rev. Lei Lanni's ministry and our prayer ministry here at USC began.

Rev. Lei Lanni started to attend USC and we were blessed to become friends with her. She then started to use our beautiful facility as a home base for her prayer-training program here in Arizona, a sort of training center-west for her ministry.

Last year, she offered to serve in our Prayer Chaplain Ministry. It thrills me to the core of my being that she has volunteered to lead our program. So, as we say goodbye to our beloved spiritual family, I am grateful that you will continue to have this powerful ministry, and who better to leave it with than the woman who had the vision to create it? We have been blessed to partner with Rev. Lei Lanni in this vital ministry.

At the present time, we have fifteen prayer chaplains. They call a list of congregants each month asking, "How may I hold you in prayer." If you do not have a chaplain and you desire one please let Cathy Collins, our Administer know.

Belief is Powerful, Continue from Page 4

ness which comes from a belief that we are loved and supported. Our limiting beliefs keep us bottled up, like a pumpkin, unable for the fullness of the sunshine of God's love to nurture us into full expression.

To grow, individually and as a spiritual community, we must be willing to question limiting beliefs. We must be willing to leave the security of consistent thought, as we open our hearts to be guided to a new awareness.

Rev. Jack Boland wrote, "My part is to believe; God's part is to provide all that is needed."

I invite you to have a willingness to look at your beliefs and question their validity. Consider your beliefs from God's perspective. Look at yourself, your life, and the life of Unity Spiritual Center with limitless compassion and an understanding of God's abundance. Trust your feelings and transform your life. Always remember to keep within your heart, one still secret spot where dreams may grow.

Rev. Edwene Gaines writes in her book "The Four Spiritual Laws of Prosperity"; "Directed faith is not a vague, hazy, wishful yearning. It is a powerful belief of expectancy that causes the Universe to send us wonderful things."

I close with an affirmation for our days to come. We are filled with faith and open to all possibilities.

With warm love, Rev. Sharon



Church Mice

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www.churchmice.net



Have you seen the tomatoes? They are growing in our community garden! Take a look!

Intentional Leaving



As we plan for a transition of ministry leadership, I thought it would be good to address some aspects of the ministry that we often avoid. One of the subjects is about leaving a ministry. As ministers, we are leaving because we know that it is time for new, expansive leadership. We will be

celebrating this with you. But, usually, if people leave a ministry, it is not celebrated. And people leave churches all the time. They may do so gradually or suddenly, they may do so thoughtfully or on a whim, and they may do so with spiritual guidance, but the reality is that people do leave. Ministers may not like it, but some of us have to face the fact that the reason our church isn't growing is because no matter how carefully we're welcoming and integrating newcomers, we're keeping pace with exiting 'oldcomers'!

Church leaving is a pervasive and regular occurrence, and it has no small impact on the communities of which we're a part. Yet despite the weight of the issue, it's not something we reflect on thoughtfully too often. So that's what I'd like to do with you in the space of the next couple of pages—with a little bit of objective distance from the frustration and confusion and grief associated with people leaving church.

What church is

So what is a spiritual community? Let me run my working definition past you: A spiritual community is a family who gather in a habit of love, who depend on each other in service, and who listen to spiritual guidance.

While others may be present when the community meets, it is when people in some sort of geographical proximity meet with others. So when two or three all love each other and start meeting together, they form a community. This is the pattern we see in Acts—a pattern that the rest of the New Testament assumes. Moreover, because those in any given place are all in a community together, they are a family; they are all children of the same heavenly Father. They are invited to consider each other as brothers and sisters. So a Spiritual Center is a family.

Yet this family does not simply gather once; the local community gathers in a habit of love. Their gathering is not like a school reunion, which may happen once every 10 years (provided someone is motivated to organize it). Their gathering is more like a regular family meal or outing. It is assumed that family members will want to be there, and it's assumed that attendance takes some priority for that hour or two over other options.

Furthermore, because it's assumed that the family will gather regularly, we should not neglect their habit of meeting together: they love each other and they meet regularly because of their mutual love and in order to express their mutual love.

Furthermore, when the family or local church gathers, they recognize their interdependence. The members of the community depend on each other in service. Every member is indispensable, and while each may serve in different ways, the service of every one is for the edification of the whole. This is the pattern of mutual ministry that the New Testament outlines again and again, and the pattern that caused the New Testament writers to urge every one of us to speak the truth in love and to "stir up one another to love and good works". This is the essential character of a community, since all need this sort of encouragement.

However, the family doesn't just depend upon each other. Primarily they depend upon God—listening in humility. When they meet, they know that God is among them and in them.

We mustn't miss the significant things the Bible speaks of. Belonging to a spiritual family is an astonishing privilege. It teaches and reminds me that when I turn up to my local church, I'm part of the family of God—connected to brothers and sisters in eternal love. It teaches me that when I turn up, my spiritual needs should be met by those on whom I depend, and that, likewise, I am indispensably needed by others. It teaches me that when I turn up, I will encounter the God of the universe and that I will hear that voice address us in a way that enriches the gathering, changes lives and impacts the world. We often turn up to church thinking anything but these kinds of thoughts. Yet this is what we should expect when we belong to a community.

These realities have, of course, all sorts of implications that are worth exploring and meditating

Intentional Leaving—Continued from Page 10

on. But for now, we'll focus our thoughts on the implications of 'what' church is for 'when' and 'how' we might leave it.

When to leave a church

What we've seen leaving your church is no small thing. It's not like letting your gym membership run out, then signing up with another gym a bit closer to home. It's not even like changing jobs and working with a new bunch of people on a new project. It's more like changing families. Some who change churches think of it as being more like changing gyms or jobs than changing families. That's probably because they're thinking about themselves more than others, or because they're thinking about church like a consumer. But we need to see the relational implications of changing churches.

The obvious significance of this is that changing churches is not a small thing to do; it's huge. It's never something that ought to be done lightly, thoughtlessly or prayer-lessly. In fact, it will be a *rare* situation in which it's the best or the right thing to do.

All this means that we should not simply decide it is time for a change, and head to another church down the road. Brothers and sisters should ask themselves some very hard questions before making any decisions about leaving a church. The decision matters too much to be taken less seriously.

How to leave a church

But if we presume a person has reasons for wanting to leave, how should they and their church community approach it? This is a decision that impacts many, and so the approach will involve many people—the person leaving, the ministers, and many others. Here are seven practical suggestions.

Pray. We should pray for motives, for a right understanding, for wisdom in decision-making, and for fellowship to be preserved both before and after the leaver leaves.

Discuss it carefully. One who is thinking of leaving church should talk about it with trusted friends. They should also discuss it with the ministers. Preferably, it would be good to discuss it before a decision is made, so that the wisdom of the community can contribute to the decision. Every effort should be made to

be honest about the reasons why leaving is being considered. That may well involve saying or hearing some hard things. But leaving church is too significant a decision to gloss over key concerns.

Listen—When someone is considering leaving or has made a decision to leave, it's a critical moment for the leaders of the church to stop talking and start listening. If a church member tells the leaders that they are planning to leave, then it's definitely time for an evaluation! Such concerns ought to be heard and weighed with the utmost care. If the person who raises these concerns is right about the state of the church, then the issues are much bigger than whether one individual leaves. But even if a person is raising issues that may not be considered legitimate reasons to leave (e.g. "My needs are not being met"), there still may be some important things for the church leadership to hear and learn.

Be as public as possible. Given the mutual belonging that characterizes church, it's important that the whole family be aware of what's happening. Because it's not a small thing for a person to leave a family, making sure people are aware of someone's departure should not be neglected. This may be done in a variety of ways, and different situations will require different approaches.

If the person leaving is willing, it's great to share with the congregation where they're going and why, and for the church to pray for them. This may sound like a strange thing to say, but even if a person is leaving because they are unhappy or disappointed in the church community, it can be healthy for the leaver to be given an opportunity to articulate their reasons, such as in a Board meeting. It may force them to think more carefully about it. It may also give the church community the information it needs. But whatever the scenario, an explanation of a person's leaving serves to underline how significant we think it is when someone goes, and therefore how important we think the community is.

Don't be afraid to feel and express grief. When a

Intentional Leaving—Continued from Page 11

person leaves a church, it is a painful thing. The fellowship is, in a very real sense, being torn. This, again, is because of what church is. So we ought not be embarrassed to feel the grief that comes in that moment, or to express it—even publicly. In fact, if you don't feel grief, perhaps you ought to be asking yourself some hard questions about why.

Keep encouraging until the leaver is established elsewhere. Just because someone has had their last week at church with you doesn't mean they're already being encouraged elsewhere. Moreover, it's great when church members and ministers alike continue to express their fellowship with their brother or sister by praying, contacting and encouraging them, even after they've gone. Again, the nature of our relationships in church should mean that this happens instinctively.

Be the sort of church people hate to leave. At the end of the day, it ought to be hard to leave a church—not because people make it hard for you, nor because a whole bunch of people are telling you why you shouldn't, but simply because it feels like family—a family you love, a family upon whom you depend, and a family among whom you've met God, grown and been equipped for life in the world. So it would seem to me that our chief responsibility as church leaders or church members is to keep working at nurturing a church community that reflects the picture as much as possible. Wouldn't it be great if those who left our churches only ever felt like it was a heartbreaking thing to do?

These are my thoughts and I am sharing them with you as a community and with our Board of Trustees. There have been times where some have left intentionally or have just floated away. I believe that we as a community need a more intentional welcoming of new congregants and a more intention process of leaving. — Rev. Jim

We are always available:
www.unitysc.org

Why Does Unity Observe Lent?

On Wednesday, March 6, at 6:00 pm, we had an Ash Wednesday service that marked the beginning of Lent. Lent is the forty day period, excluding Sundays, that precedes the celebration of resurrection, known as Easter

Lent is a spiritual season devoted to soul searching, self-discipline, rededication and atonement. Most Unity Churches observe the season of Lent.

Lent is a season of spiritual growth. We are like the seeds in the dark, winter ground preparing to sprout with new spring growth. We grow in the silence as we blend and merge our minds with God-Mind. As we pull out the weeds of negative thinking and discontent, we allow our true selves to be nourished, as we bloom with our own unique colors and fragrance.

Lent is a forty-day opportunity to observe a ritual that gives us the occasion to rededicate ourselves to deepening our spiritual growth, as well as, recommitting oneself, to eating healthy, exercising and creating

As we enter into the Lenten season, you are invited to "give up" or release what is not working for you in your life. Ask Spirit to guide you as you open your mind and heart to a willingness to live at a higher level of spiritual consciousness.

The first Sunday in Lent Rev. Sharon said, "In Unity we say Lent stands for...Let's End Negative Thinking." So, for the season of Lent I ask you to join, "The Good Words Club" with me. In doing so, we agree to speak words that give positive life to ourselves and others. We pledge to give up negative words as we embrace positive words.

That is our assignment...to Stop negative words in the Name of Love...before they break a heart... and to always think it over...yes, think it over before we speak. In doing so we will change our lives and the lives of others. God Bless Your Words.

