

The Interfaith Temple

Explore • Experience • Evolve



An Inclusive, safe home for spiritual kinship, growth, evolution and loving support.

Newsletter



December 2021

Pondering the Light — Rev. Dr. Stacy

Driving to church on a sunny winter morning a few years ago, I was struck by the play of shadows of the woods lining the road and the bright light that streamed through them. I noticed that the shadow of every tree was clearly defined on the pavement, and saw how the brightness of the light made the shadows appear very dark. And it occurred to me that there was a lesson in that.

This is what I think we are seeing in our world right now as well; as the brightness of Divine light grows in our spiritual progression, so too do we see much more clearly that which is dark in our society. It isn't that it hasn't always been there, it's just that because of the light, more is revealed.

Yes, the brighter the light, the more clearly defined the shadow. That much is true. But is the shadow really any deeper? Is the shadow any darker just because the light is brighter?

It seems to me that the shadow is always there, even when the surrounding light is dim or hazy. The shadow is always the same, it is only the light that makes it appear different. When the light is low, the shadows appear fuzzy and the borders are difficult, if not impossible, to establish.

During this Season of Light, we notice the contrast more. Paying attention, as I did on that winter drive, gives us something to ponder. And the quiet darkness of winter is an excellent time for that introspection. What does it mean to you? As more light is shone do we not see more clearly where our society ails, what needs healing? What paradigms need to be shifted to bring us to a more just, joyful society? Are we letting our own lights shine, or are we hiding our brilliance? As we prepare for a new year, perhaps this season of light could be a season of shining our inner light on our dark corners, so that we may be prepared to shine more brightly in the coming year.

Let this be the season to prepare to let your light shine!

Blessings,

Stacy

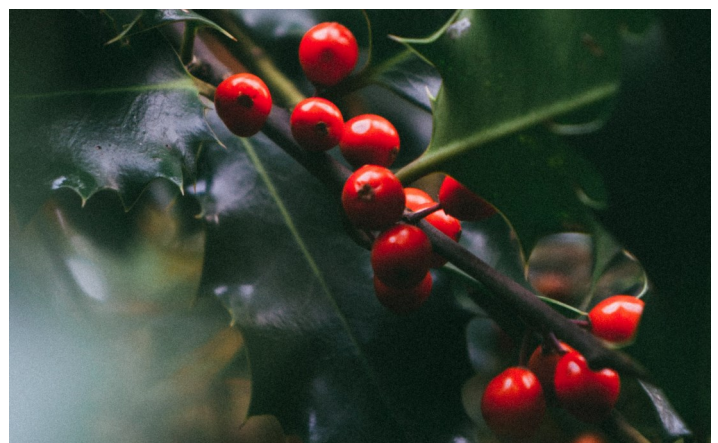
December Calendar:

- Dec 1** [Spiritual Fluidity Circle](#) — 7:30 PM *Rev. Dr. Samora & Rev. Jacquie Droescher* — Do you blend spiritual practices or float easily between different faiths? What does it mean to be “Spiritually Fluid”?
- Dec 5** [The Presents of Presence: A Mindfulness Workshop](#) — 10:00 AM — Find your center, focus and ground during the hectic holidays.
[Intention Circle](#) — The Intention Circles will resume January 12th.
[Sacred Relationship Circle](#) — The Sacred Relationship Circle will resume January 19th.
- Dec 19** [Regular Sunday: Celebration of Simple Gifts](#) — 10:00 AM — Featured Speaker: Rev. Dr. Stacy — Still searching for the “perfect gift”? Seek out the simple, most precious gifts from the heart. *Last service of 2021!*
- Dec 21** [Healing Circle](#) — 7:30 PM *Rev. Dr. Victor* — Guided healing meditation, discussion and collective healing.
- Dec 31** [Special Program with Rev. Dr. Jay & Rev. Dr. Stacy?](#) Stay tuned!

We hope you will join us.

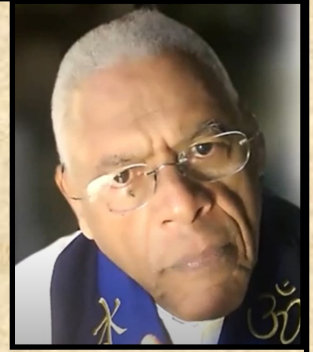
Check our online calendar for holy days and Temple events.

Calendar - The Interfaith Temple



The Mystic's Corner

by Rev. Dr. Richard Lake



If you are reading this piece, know that it barely escaped my cutting room floor. I wrestled with the question, “how do I write about mystics while thinking about “The Season of Light?” Finally I decided I was trying too hard. I needed to get the season out of my mind and deal with these simple questions, “To whom should the title “Mystic” be given; and what does that have to do with me?”

Fr. Richard Rohr, a Franciscan Priest, and founder of “The Center of Action and Contemplation” in New Mexico, defines *mystic* as “One who has moved from mere belief and belonging systems to actual inner experiences.” Given this definition, in my opinion, the title should not be limited to household names like, “Meister Eckhart,” “Hildegard of Bingen,” “Teresa of Avila,” “St. John of the Cross,” “Julian of Norwich,” and other names often quoted from yester. The title could also include some more contemporary figures like Eckhart Tolle and Amoda Maa. And, by Rohr’s definition combined with his work he may very well be a mystic himself. In fact, in reflecting on those Gospels according to Mark, Matthew and Luke, the character, Jesus of Nazareth could be viewed as a mystic as well.

What all these figures seemed to have in common is what Raiman Panikkar, in his book, *The Experience of God: Icons of the Mystery*, describes the vicissitudes of actually experiencing the mystery. He suggests the end point is to acknowledge “Not Knowing” what God is, in the face of those who think they know but don’t. Another common characteristic of mystics is instead of abandoning their original faith tradition, they cultivated their faiths by diving deeply enough in their traditions that get to that “not knowing,” and their ego’s control over their operations diminished enough for them to awaken. I like to think of it as “the Siddhartha Gautama to Buddha kind of thing.”

So, what does that have to do with me?

In his book, *The Mystic heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in The Worlds’ Religions*, Wayne Teasdale argues that coming through a dark night of faith and having ones’ inner core perceived by others as power can actually be the story of every person who awakens to the mystery within, without and beyond themselves. That said to me, “maybe I can experience that,” and I began looking for examples to follow — that could show and tell me how to dive deeply in my faith tradition. Of course Jesus was there — not to worship but to follow — and there were mystics of other traditions too; some are still alive. And that is what caused me to seek out and follow mystics.

Now, about the light:

We, in my tradition, follow a Liturgical Calendar. Our year begins in this season of light with three sections: Advent, a waiting for the light; Christmas, the arrival of the light; and an Epiphany feast day, celebrating the light. After that we proceed through the remainder of the year, experiencing what Ken Wilber calls Spiral Dynamics; every year, come December, that light shines a little brighter.

So, here we are in the month of December, celebrating the light with other cultures; with those who focus on the Winter Solstice, when daylight shifts from shrinking to expansion is the worship focus; those remembering the Macca-bean revolt in the 2nd century BC, or the festival of Lights; and, though a little earlier in the year, there is Diwali, a five day celebration the triumph of light over despair. For we Christians, it is the birth of a new child, a new light in the world, or a second Coming, and awakening, all depending on where we are in the dynamic spiral. Though some might be uncertain enough to just settle gifts exchange ritual and enjoy the gift of giving. In all cases, including the Mystics, light is the hope for love and Joy,

So, here we have it: my opinion on who gets the title of “Mystic” and what that answer does for me. And you will notice my thoughts on the season of light was in the back of my mind.

Messages from the Mystics

Awakening has nothing to do with the achievement of a special state of consciousness. It has everything to do with presence and openness. When you live as presence and openness - in all ways and always - you are the light of the world.

Amoda Maa

“Divine Order”

by Rev. Dr. Victor

I offer a monthly healing circle for The Interfaith Temple and bring a different theme and approach to each of them. I was inspired to share a meditation on the Four Archangels, based upon a Jewish bedtime prayer, which asks we be surrounded and protected by the angels and their respective powers. This invokes Archangel Michael, for protection, on our right, Archangel Rafael, for healing, behind us, Archangel Uriel, for illumination, in front of us, and Archangel Gabriel to our left, for messages and guidance. In this column, I will focus on Archangel Gabriel and how awareness of angelic presence came into my life.

As I have shared before, my spiritual path reopened in my late thirties through a series of wonderful synchronicities. It began with Yoga classes, being asked to facilitate meditation, and retreats to a Zen Monastery in upstate New York. At one of these retreats, a friend shared Reiki, something that I was not conscious of in this lifetime but resonated with me and led to pursuing Reiki classes and attunement.

At the first Reiki class and after attunement, the Reiki Master Teacher asked us to place our hands in a clasped position over our heart chakras and close our eyes. Immediately, I perceived an energy being that I could only describe as an angel. Not having “angel consciousness” prior to this experience, I shared what I saw with my teacher. He asked me to close my eyes again and ask the angel’s name. I did and immediately heard, “Gabriel.” The teacher smiled when I shared this and said this made

total sense as Gabriel was the messenger and in much of my work, I too was a messenger.

That evening after the class, I asked my daughter who was twelve at the time if she wanted to experience Reiki energy and she enthusiastically said, “Yes!” I had her sit in a chair and began by placing my hands above her head and allowing the energy to flow. She then shared that she had a vision of family members who passed, including those who transitioned before she was born, and described them in detail. She then added that there was an “angel” hovering above them! I asked her if she knew the angel’s name and she responded, “Gabriel!” Here was confirmation of what I had experienced earlier that day; that there is a realm of beings we call “angels,” and that Archangel Gabriel has a connection to me and my family.

When I began with The New Seminary in 1995 and met Rabbi Joseph Gelberman, he would often share about the archangels and it was from him that I first heard the song, “B’Sheim Hashem”, which blends the traditional prayer with beautiful music, written by Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. In addition to the presence of the Archangels, the prayer/lyric ends with describing the “Shekinah,” the Divine Presence, above us. I cried the first time I heard this as it so touched my heart and reinforced what I came to understand as this divine love surrounding each of us.

From that first day in Reiki class to that first day in The New Seminary, I recognized Rabbi Gelberman’s teaching; “Everything is unfolding in Divine Order.”

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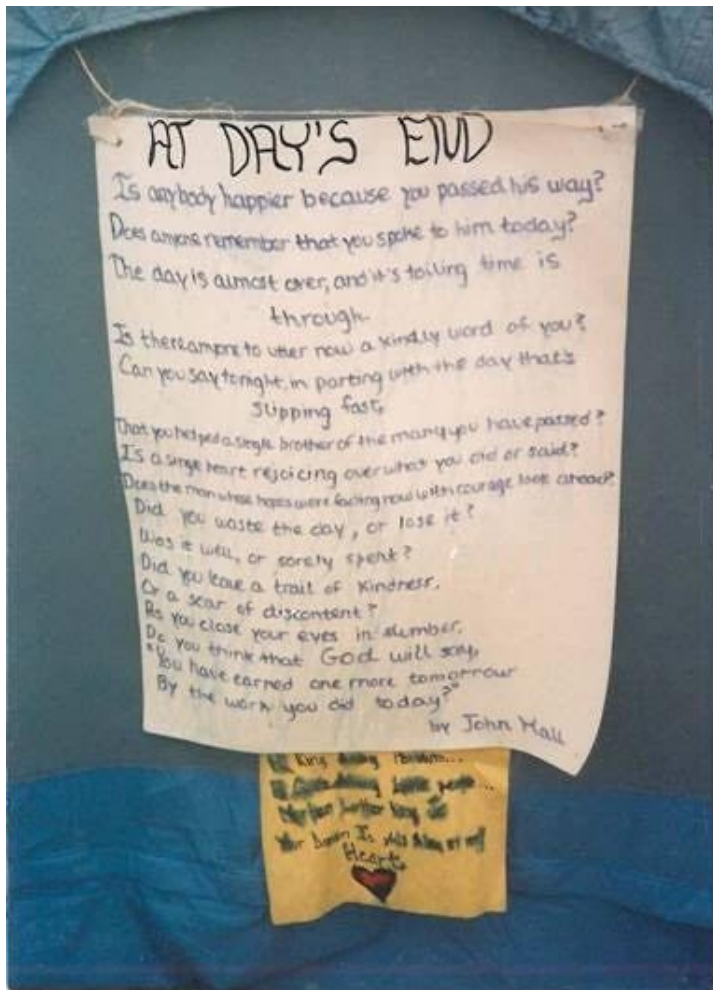
Healing Circle

Tuesday, December 21st, 7:30 PM

with Rev. Dr. Victor

Energy and Spiritual Healing have been practiced since ancient times. Shamans, medicine women and men, and practitioners of many different modalities have learned to work with the human energy field to promote natural healing for body, mind and spirit.





From Amber Marie Speights, TNS Student

This poem has been really helpful to me in my life. It is called At Days End. I first saw this as a teenager as I was walking around DC. This poem was on an unhoused person's tent. I had my camera and took this picture. It is blurry and runny because it was starting to rain.

At Day's End

by John Hall

Is anybody happier because you passed his way?
 Does anyone remember that you spoke to him today?
 The day is almost over and its toiling time is through;
 Is there anyone to utter now a kindly word of you?
 Does anyone remember that you spoke to him today?
 Can you say tonight, in parting with the day that's slipping fast,
 That you helped a single brother of the many that you passed?
 Is a single heart rejoicing over what you did or said?
 Does the man whose hopes were fading now with courage look ahead?
 Did you waste the day, or lose it?
 Was it well or sorely spent?
 Did you leave a trail of kindness, or a scar of discontent?
 As you close your eyes in slumber, do you think that God will say,
 "you have earned one more tomorrow by the work you did today?"

Unwrapping Love

by Sharon Callender, TNS Student

"Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'" (Matthew 1:23 NLT Bible)

The Creator of All unwrapped Love in the gift we know as the Light of the world.

A gift of Light that illuminates the truth of who we are, beloved beings,

intricately and intentionally sculpted by the Source of Life.

A gift of Light that reveals our Creator's longing to be entangled in our lives.

A gift of Light that says we are never forgotten or abandoned, only deeply loved.

A gift of Light that reminds us we are infused with divine flecks of radiance,

shimmering beneath our skin,

in our blood and bones,

woven into our souls.

A gift of Light that confirms the benevolence, compassion and care of a Creator who loved creation enough to live among us.



2021, What a year this has been!

We are so grateful for our Temple Ministry Team, Elders, Guest Speakers, Associate Ministers, Students, and for **so much love** from our amazing international community (**that's YOU!**)

This is the first year we've offered these wonderful on-line services and programs, and we've been thrilled with the response! However, with the expenses from all of the online platforms and services, we really need your ongoing financial support to continue providing these free services.

During this season of giving, please consider showing your gratitude and support for **The Interfaith Temple.**

Please show us some love – here are some ideas for support:

- \$15 covers one month of Mailchimp services
- \$50 covers one month of Zoom platform
- \$50 covers one month of website hosting
- \$50 covers one month of online storage
- \$250 covers one month of professional website design/maintenance
- Or any amount to honor someone special to you.

You can choose a one-time donation, or a make it a monthly contribution.

Donate Here

The Interfaith Temple is a 501 c-3 non-profit religious organization.
All donations are tax deductible in the USA.

**Thank you for your support of The Interfaith Temple!
May you and yours have a Joyous Holiday Season!**

Most Reverend Dr. Michael J. Festa, Bishop and CEO

Right Reverend Dr. Jay Speights, Elder

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