

The Interfaith Temple

Explore • Experience • Evolve



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

Newsletter



January 2022

Resolution Revolution — Rev. Dr. Stacy

Do you make New Year's Resolutions? Do you keep them very long before they fade away? If you do you're one of the few! Most people have forgotten their resolutions halfway into February, if not before! So how do we make lasting changes to improve ourselves? It's time for a **Resolution Revolution!**

Instead of making resolutions, set intentions. Write them down, craft an Intention Board (check out our workshop on January 2nd!) Pray or meditate daily lifting up your intentions. (Join an intention circle to help you!) Deepak Chopra said:

"Everything that happens in the Universe begins with Intention. An intention is a directed impulse of consciousness that contains the seed form of that which you aim to create."

When you set an intention, you are co-creating with the Divine. It is the sacred creation energy — that directed impulse of consciousness — that brings your intention to reality. And it is POWERFUL!

It seems that a resolution is *resolving* to do something, and that it is more final than an intention. However, used in this manner, a resolution is a "firm determination to do something." But when we consider that a determination is dependent on our *will* or *willpower*, not on Divine co-creation, you can see where this pales in comparison to the power of an intention, which is using the energy of creation instead of willpower.

That said, it is also important to say that setting intentions is not prosperity gospel! The real power in manifesting an intention is that it is aligned with the Divine, so it is vitally important to seek Divine will when crafting your intention. Using a process of deep contemplation, prayer and meditation can help you determine a good intention for you. Certainly something that is for your greater good, founded in love, and positively affects others around you is a general guideline. Spend some time, thought and prayer as you ponder:

What is your intention for 2022?

Let's work together to make this year the best ever!

Blessings,

January Calendar:

- Jan 2** [Intention Board Workshop](#)—2:00 PM *Rev. Dr. Samora & Rev. Dr. Stacy*— Craft your intention for the year, gather images, and join us for an afternoon tea to put it all together with a group blessing/meditation. \$18 suggested donation.
- Jan 5** [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"?
- Jan 12** [Intention Circle](#) — 1:00 PM or 7:30 PM *Rev. Dr. Stacy* leads these circles to meditate and uplift each others' intentions for the month. Registration and daily practice required for these powerful groups.
- Jan 16** [Regular Sunday: The Dreamers](#) — 10:00 AM — *featured speakers Elder Rev. Dr. Jay Speights, and Rev. Dr. Stacy* Celebrating Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and other dreamers of civil rights and social justice.
- Jan 25** [Healing Circle](#) — 7:30 PM *Rev. Dr. Victor* — Guided healing meditation, discussion and collective healing.
- Jan 25** **February Newsletter Submissions Due!** **Focus is DIVINE LOVE** (Seasonal Images) Submissions to RevDrStacy@theinterfaithtemple.org (700 word max)

We hope you will join us.

Check our online calendar for holy days and Temple events.

[Calendar - The Interfaith Temple](#)



Snowflake Macro Photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

“Divine Order”

by Rev. Dr. Victor

I moved to Queens, New York, in 1995. This was the same year that I began attending The New Seminary for Interfaith Studies. One day, I was driving to an appointment in the Flushing area of Queens, when something unexpected came into view. It was so beautiful and amazing that I had to pull over, get out of my car, and marvel at its majesty! There stood a Hindu temple in the middle of an otherwise non-descript neighborhood! I came to learn that this was built by The Hindu Temple Society of North America and was the first Hindu temple in the United States. The temple is named Sri Maha Vallabha Ganapati Devasthanam and is dedicated to the Hindu deity, Lord Ganesh. This, in and of itself, would have been a wonderful discovery but there was more!



The temple is located on Bowne Street and when I drove further down the street I spotted three churches, a synagogue, two smaller Hindu temples, a Taoist center, a Buddhist temple, and a preserved landmark homestead in a park toward the end of the street, Bowne House. This amazing interfaith presence on a street less than one-half mile long piqued my curiosity. And then, Bowne House? Bowne Street? Who was Bowne?

Wonder of wonders! John Bowne built this house in 1661 after emigrating from England to Boston and then to what became the

Flushing neighborhood of Queens, New York. At the time, New York was the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, administered by the Governor, Peter Stuyvesant. Stuyvesant forbade the practice of any religion except the Dutch Reformed Church. Bowne and his family were Quakers and held Quaker meetings in their home. Stuyvesant ordered him arrested and he was sent to Holland to stand trial for defiance of the edict. There, he exonerated himself by appealing to the guarantees of religious liberty contained in the Flushing patent of 1645, granted by the previous Governor, William Kieft. His eloquence and defense of religious freedom won the respect of the judges. He was released and returned home in 1664. Stuyvesant was ordered to extend tolerance to all religious sects. Bowne’s unprecedented religious activism came to be modeled and embraced by the framers of the U.S. Constitution. Not only did Bowne plant the seeds of religious freedom, but he also planted the saplings of the myriad varieties of beautiful trees that grace the streets of Flushing.

So, it was Divine Order that I happened upon Bowne street shortly after beginning my interfaith journey and learned of its history of religious liberty, and the representation of so many faiths there today. If that weren’t enough, on December 21st, 2021, it was announced that the New York City Council declared Bowne Street will be co-named Ganesh Temple Street! This is interfaith coming full circle, and most certainly, Divine Order.

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Healing Circle

Tuesday, January 25th, 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.



Lessons from the Magi

by Rev. Dr. Stacy Goforth

On January 6th, Christians around the world celebrate the Epiphany, twelve days after Christmas, to commemorate the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child. If you're familiar with Christianity, you may recall that the Magi gifted Jesus with gold, frankincense and myrrh. This act is the foundation of the current practice of gift giving on Christmas. But what else is known about the Magi? Why did they bring gifts to Jesus? Is there anything from historical records that gives us any more information? And is there anything we can learn FROM them?

The Bible tells us they were from the East. While some traditions say that they were kings of Arabia, Persia and India, the reference to the East actually refutes that. Arabia, while geographically southeast of Israel, was considered at the time of the gospel writings to be south. Also, whenever kings or queens visited Israel in other passages, they were referred to as such. (Consider the Queen of Sheba visiting King Solomon for example.) Instead, the scriptures state that they were Magi, or wise men. The idea of them being kings was not proposed until the 3rd Century, and the names we sometimes hear; Balthazar, Melchior, and Gaspar were added in about the 6th century, and were based on the names of kings of Persia (Balthazar), Arabia (Melchior) and India (Gaspar).

The term Magi actually refers to a priestly caste of Medes from Persia or Parthia. These countries were East of Israel. We know that there were at least two, as the word Magi is plural for Magoi or Magus. (The common reference to three Magi is not biblical but likely based on the three gifts listed. The Syriac church indicates there were twelve!) Considered wise men, the word Magi is translated in several places as wise men or magicians (a word based on the same root). But the Magi were not magicians or sorcerers. Magi were actually Zoroastrian priests, a religion which was perhaps the first monotheistic religion and expressly forbids sorcery. They were considered to have profound and extraordinary religious knowledge. Scholars have considered Zoroastrianism strongly influenced Judaism—and vice versa.

We do have other Biblical references for wise men—in Genesis and Exodus the Pharaohs called on the wise men and magicians for counsel. The fact that they were named separate from the magicians indicates that the wise men were not magicians. We have no reason to connect the Egyptian wise men with the Magi from Persia, but it is possible that they were early predecessors.

Wise men were also referenced in the book of Daniel, and these are the Magi, the Zoroastrian priests. Daniel had been taken with other young Hebrews into servitude in Babylon (which is in Persia—currently known as Iran) by King Nebuchadnezzar, who appointed Daniel the ruler of all the wise men. This is important, because it is through Daniel's influence and prophecies that the

Magi had knowledge of the messiah to come. It is through Daniel that some of the Zoroastrian and Judaic beliefs intermingled.

Another important thing we can learn from the book of Daniel is that the Magi were astrologers. The ancient study of the alignment of planets and stars and historical events has revealed patterns that are still being studied today.

So the Magi, some 500 years later, having the prophecies of the expected messiah from Daniel, could well have taken a careful look at planetary alignments that would indicate the birth of a great king, especially those that coincided with the prophesied time that Daniel had indicated. When that time arrived, and they saw the stars and planets align, they made special preparations to travel to that land. A journey of over a thousand miles! Consider making a trip from Hartford, CT to Atlanta, GA on foot or camel! It is estimated such a journey would take between 3 months to a year to accomplish!

Why would visiting a newborn "king" be so important to them that they would leave behind their families, their work, and their livelihoods for what was a very dangerous two year round trip journey? What should we learn from the Magi?

1. They lived up to their name; they were indeed, wise. They were wise enough to know that they didn't have all the answers, and that a great leader for the future of humanity could be from any tradition. They knew to study all of the prophecies—even those outside their own faith—for possibilities for humanity.
2. They used all the tools they had to watch carefully for the signs. Had they not studied the prophecies, and astrology, they would probably have missed the birth of Jesus.
3. Because they knew the importance of who Jesus was prophesied to be, they knew that he should be honored and loved, and gifted befitting a king or deity. The gift of gold represented the eternity of a kingdom. The gift of frankincense was for a deity. And the gift of myrrh, a burial spice, represented the death of the body.
4. They were devoted to something beyond themselves. They were ready—and willing—to give up everything for what they believed and knew to be true when the signs indicated that it was time.
5. They paid attention to all the ways divine messages can be received. They willingly followed a moving star, and heeded a warning in a dream not to return to Herod. Had they not, this story may have ended before it really began.

But the most important lesson came to me as a personal epiphany of sorts; as I was praying about this message and to say what God wanted you to hear, this statement came to me:

The Magi understood that God transcends all nations, races, cultures, all politics, and all religions, and that God should be worshipped in whatever form God chooses to present Godself. Whether that be a babe in a manger, or in the devotion of a pet, in the stars in the sky, or in the face of a friend or stranger. God presents Godself to us in uncountable ways and times. The Magi were paying attention... are you?

Make It So

by Rev. Dr. Victor Fuhrman

The power is yours, it lies within,
You just must let it go.
And it is so easy to begin,
Simply open and make it so.

Energy guided with intention,
With awareness for you to bestow.
Transcend to the higher dimension,
With desire you make it so.

Learn to trust your inner voice,
It says what you need to know.
You are always free to make the choice,
With freedom you make it so.

The magic key is in your heart,
When it's opened the love will flow.
Know you're worthy right from the start,
With love you make it so!

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May you and yours have a
Blessed New Year!**

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

Right Reverend Dr. Jay Speights, Elder

The Interfaith Temple Ministry Team

Rev. Dr. Stacy GoforthSenior Minister revdrstacy@theinterfaithtemple.org
Rev. Dr. Victor Fuhrman..... Minister of Communication revdrvictor@theinterfaithtemple.org
Rev. Dr. Samora Smith..... Minister of Music revdrsamora@theinterfaithtemple.org
Rev. Maven Eve Minister of Technology revmaveneve@theinterfaithtemple.org

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