

# Self-Empowerment

Autumn 2016

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

Vol. 24, Number 1

A publication of  Agape Interfaith Ministries

## May We Live in Interesting Times

With all the excitement of the upcoming election, I was led to remember the phrase, "May you live in interesting times." I decided to google the phrase to see what I might find. Would the wish for *interesting times* be a blessing or a curse? Following is one of the (lightly edited) descriptions that I found:

### Origin

*While purporting to be a blessing, this is in fact a curse. The expression is always used ironically, with the clear implication that 'uninteresting times', of peace and tranquility, are more life-enhancing than interesting ones.*



*'May you live in interesting times' is widely reported as being of ancient Chinese origin but is neither Chinese nor ancient, being recent and western. It certainly seems to have been intended to sound oriental, in the faux-Chinese 'Confucius he say' style, but that's as near to China as it actually gets. Confucius's actual sayings are as elusive as those of his western*

*counterpart Aesop - we have no written records from either of them.*

*The phrase was introduced in the 20th century in the form 'interesting age' rather than 'interesting times' and appears that way in the opening remarks made by Frederic R. Coudert at the Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, 1939:*

*Some years ago, in 1936, I had to write to a very dear and honored friend of mine, who has since died, Sir Austen Chamberlain, brother of the present Prime Minister, and I concluded my letter with a rather banal remark, "that we were living in an interesting age." Evidently he read the whole letter, because by return mail he wrote to me and concluded as follows: "Many years ago, I learned from one of our diplomats in China that one of the principal Chinese curses heaped upon an enemy*

*is, 'May you live in an interesting age.'" "Surely", he said, "no age has been more fraught with insecurity than our own present time."*

*As to the currently used 'interesting times' version, we can only date that to post WWII. No one is sure who introduced the term but the person who did most to bring it to the public's attention was Robert Kennedy. In a speech in Cape Town in June 1966, Kennedy said:*

*There is a Chinese curse which says 'May he live in interesting times.' Like it or not we live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty; but they are also more open to the creative energy of men than any other time in history.*

*As those who lived through the 1960s (and can remember) will recall, they were nothing if not interesting.*

[Source: <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/may-you-live-in-interesting-times.html>]

After reading that description of the phrase's origin, I found myself wondering about two things:

1. Do we really desire peaceful times as opposed to rather chaotic *interesting* times? and
2. Have there ever really been *un-interesting* times?

### Do I really want peace?

Although I tend to hang out with people who claim to want, and consistently pray for, peace in our time, I suspect that most people *fear* true peace. Anecdotal evidence leads me to believe that those of us with active egos prefer some drama, conflict, and a baseline of molehill-size problems to be addressed and overcome. It is as if we believe that if we don't have some problem(s) to discuss with our friends, that we'll be bored or boring, or worse, judged as arrogant – for what would they think of me if I were in a constant state of ok-ness (aka *peace*)? Wouldn't that separate me from the rest of humanity, individuals and groups of people who are struggling with every sort of physical, emotional, or spiritual challenge?

There is good stress and bad stress. We have *opportunities* to grow through accepting our feelings and meeting our needs as circumstances change. Stress can be judged as good stress when it inspires creative

ways to meet new experiences. But the same stressor can be felt as bad stress and lead to suffering when we try to hold on to the past, resisting change. It may depend on how we process new experiences in our lives whether stress appears to be good or bad.

As I have recently moved from the Philadelphia area to a 55-plus community in Florida, there were many details to address which I could easily have suffered over and complained about. Even if I didn't complain, I could easily have engaged in self-talk of anxiety, loss, unfairness, etc. It isn't just about the outward signs of my words and behavior. Rather it is what I believe about how to meet new and unpredictable and uncontrollable people, places, and things. How flexible and resilient am I? Am I in touch with trust, faith, guidance, inspiration, support, and a deeper sense of who I am in the face of the unknown?

This is where the rubber meets the road. If I really do want peace, and believe that peace is within and available to me, I can access it and allow it to permeate even major life changes during *interesting times!*

Ask yourself, especially if you think you do want more peace in your life, "What can peace feel like in the midst of change? Can I be open and receptive to my true feelings? Can I be at peace for extended periods of time, without needing to *fit in*, matching other people's life dramas? What thoughts come up for me when I am imagining a life of peace? What do I *really* want?"

Feel free to share your insights with me.

### When were there UN-interesting times?

I have heard people refer to "simpler times" or "better days" as if there were such a thing. I don't believe it. There were always crimes against humanity, economic downturns, deviousness, victimization, racism, wars, and inhumane treatment in this country and the world. There were people who predicted the "end of the world" during especially turbulent circumstances. It is a false notion that life was better in the past. While there were indeed happy loving families who sat together by the fireplace or radio, as in a Norman Rockwell painting, so, too, are there happy loving people now. Many individuals are educated about world events that were or are now extremely brutal. In the 1950's we were led through drills to prepare for the bombs that were predicted to rain down upon us.

At some point in the not-too-distant past, journalism has shifted from reporting facts to a fear-mongering deluge of fast-food junk. The current diet of "reality TV"-type of reporting is surely not representative of Reality with a capital R. The effort to be economically solvent and keep the news *interesting*

gives an unrealistic view of what's going on here and around the world.

I recommend meditation and some form of self-awareness work to mediate between the times we are currently living in and an image of a glorified past that some offer as a bogus path to happiness, security, and freedom.

Peaceful times may or may not be *interesting*, depending on how we imagine and create a more peaceful life in our own homes and community. Let's start being the peace we desire, to see what's possible.

### In this issue

As a major political process is unfolding, I lean into my own spiritual path to allow peace and faith to support my continued well-being and an informed decision as to who I will vote for. The articles in this issue express practices that you might find interesting, useful, or provocative. (While the included articles refer to "A Course in Miracles" I am not necessarily promoting that path to my readers.)

The picture on page 6 is of a tree in Sholom Park in Ocala, Florida, where my husband and I have moved.

I wish you a deep connection with the part of your soul that holds wisdom, joy, love, peace, and beauty to be enjoyed and shared.

Blessings Always!

Your fellow traveler, *Rev. Jill*



## Presidential Election 2016

It is currently August 2016 as I am writing this newsletter. There has been much emotional dialog and activity focused on the upcoming presidential election in November. While I do have opinions on the matter, I am choosing to take this opportunity to do two things:

- 1) extend love & gratitude to the election process
- 2) reclaim my projections

First, I would like to express gratitude for the complex election process that our country has in place. I hope that the various layers and parts of the process will allow for the highest and best outcome to unfold. I shall continue to extend LOVE to each participant in this important process. Through prayer and action, I set my intention to include all candidates, voters, activists, and election workers to be enfolded in the highest consciousness of unity. May each feel that their participation in this process is meaningful and valuable.

Secondly, I do my best to reclaim my projections. Many judgments are being hurled about which the ego

latches onto in an effort to make individuals right or wrong. It is easy to believe our thoughts that are based on incomplete or misleading information. It is up to me (and each of us) to humbly step back and recognize that every point of view has some validity and deserves respect. Instead of jumping the gun to attack or defend a position, I make every effort to listen – to others *and* to the still small voice within. From a centered and grounded position that honors the many expressions of the One Life called by many names, I find both shadow and light within my own self as well as others.

I pray: May we all heal and awaken together.  
Blessings to you,  
Rev Jill

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## The Opposite of Terrorism: How to Make and Plant Love Bombs!

By Scott Grace

Last week, a new friend of mine invited me over her house for an evening of bomb making.

You read that correctly.

When I arrived she had a big dining room table full of envelopes, construction paper, pens, crayons, glitter, stickers, scissors, and some delicious snacks as well. After some introductions and sharing of intentions, seven lighthearted change makers got to work. I provided the soundtrack, strumming and singing songs about the various notes that they were writing, decorating, and reading out loud.

She called it a **Love Bomb Making Party**. The idea was to hit the streets and be the opposite of terrorists, secretly planting the letter bombs in assorted locations (public bathrooms, the banana rack at supermarkets) for unsuspecting humans to pick up and detonate an emotional uplift while going about their busy lives.

The playfulness and colors on the envelopes made them look irresistible, and we held the intention that just the right person who needed the message would be the one to read it.

I myself got quite an energetic and emotional uplift from the evening. And I needed it.



Lately I had been participating in political conversations that have left me feeling like I've just eaten too much junk food for my emotional body.

I had been feeling sad about the latest waves of violence, especially the explosively violent divisive discourse my country is experiencing in its polarized presidential campaign.

The love bomb party reminded me of who I am, and what I campaign for.

I used to think I was a pacifist, but there is nothing passive about what I am about. I am an activist. A love activist, *actively involved in the installation of a new planetary vibration of playful celebration that makes a sense of separation take a permanent vacation and installs the sexy sensation of emancipation from all sense of limitation.*

You read that correctly.

What is the opposite of terrorism? A Course in Miracles says this: *"The opposite of love is fear, but what is all encompassing can have no opposite."* The word 'opposite' implies an opposing force. There is no opposing, condemning, or fighting a war on terrorism without creating the next generation of terrorists.

What can be done, then? So much! We can go to areas of extreme poverty and distress and drop love bombs from drones and planes filled with food and love notes, hand written in the language of the people we are love bombing. That's just one idea. Our hearts are full of them.

Einstein said, *"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."*

Mother Teresa said *"I was once asked why I don't participate in anti-war demonstrations. I said that as soon as you have a pro-peace rally, I'll be there."*

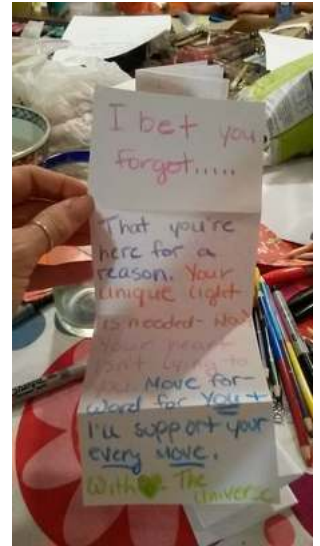
Jesus said, *"Resist not evil."*

Scott Grace said, ***"Enough said! Let's drop some love bombs!"***

I love my friend Gwen for being a grassroots love activist who did not nurture a sense of frustration or powerlessness back when that wave of pain involving the murder of unarmed men and policeman hit our hearts a few weeks back.

Instead, she threw a party. And handed out crayons.

If you also feel moved to light a candle instead of cursing the darkness, getting creative instead of reactive,



and want to join with others in doing so, Gwen Gordon leads a growing group of mischief makers committing random acts of play (RAPs) for a more loving, peaceful planet. The Love Bombs was our first RAP. There will be others.

If you want to be informed and possibly join the movement, connect up with Gwen declaring your intention at [GwenGordonPlay.com](http://GwenGordonPlay.com)

*Scott Grace is a talented and inspired musician, counselor, and author. Check out his website, [www.scottsongs.com](http://www.scottsongs.com). See his videos on YouTube and find his book available on Amazon.com: [Teach Me How To Love, A True Story That Touches Hearts & Helps With The Laundry!](#)*

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## The Quiet Mind Newsletter

by Dan Joseph  
Summer 2016

### The Combination

Imagine that you're a diver who enjoys exploring the deep blue sea. One day you hear about an ocean site that contains a sunken treasure.

You locate the site, search around in the depths, and eventually find a chest sealed with two combination locks.

You spin each lock for quite some time, trying to find the combination – but you don't know the right set. And it's challenging to see clearly deep in the ocean. There is a swirl of sediment that makes things murky. Eventually you give up and rise to the surface.

Over the next few days, you ask other divers if they have encountered the chest. Does anyone have any insight about how to open it? Does anyone know the combination?

You search for years. Finally you learn what the combination is. You dive back down, turn the locks, and find enough treasure to give you – and everyone around you – a life of ease.

Unlocking that chest is the goal of the spiritual path. It is also the goal of psychotherapy, or any other healing path.

Each of us has a spiritual treasure within the depths of our consciousness. All we need to is unlock it. And what are these "locks"?

I often describe them as a two-part combination of the following type:

Lock one is some sort of belief that "I'm not good enough."

Lock two is a belief that "I'm all alone."

All we need do is undo those two locks, or "core negative beliefs," and treasure will spill forth.

I sometimes say to my clients, "Let's see if we can find one thought from column A, and one thought from column B." I then make a sample list, to illustrate combinations:

Column A ("I'm not good enough"):	Column B ("I'm all alone"):
I'm not very attractive.	No one really likes me.
People don't think I'm very smart.	It's not worth dating – I won't find anyone.
I've failed financially.	My friends don't really want to spend time with me.
I'm too old.	I'll never find a partner.
I've made such a mess of my life.	No one will want to hire me.
I'm really socially awkward.	I'll be rejected if I try to reach out to them.
I'm too sensitive.	If I do let myself trust someone, he'll probably leave me.

Almost every one of my clients has a very clear Column A-Column B pair that dominates their lives. Diving into the psyche, finding that combination, and undoing it, is the essence of our work.

For example, here are some combinations that I've frequently seen:

"I never did well in school. If I apply for a job, I'm sure I'll get rejected."

"I don't make enough money – once women find out about that, they won't want to date me."

"I'm way too shy. People will make fun of me if I put myself out there."

"I'm not young and attractive anymore. It's pointless to look for a partner at this point."

"I'm not like normal people. People won't relate to me if I open up to them."

And so forth. As you can see, Column A involves some type of "I'm inadequate" belief, and Column B involves some form of "I'm basically alone."

This type of guilt-and-separation thinking, says *A Course in Miracles*, is the essence of our misery. But the good news, says the Course, is that it isn't true!

We are not "less than" or inadequate, regardless of what the capricious judgments of the world tell us. And we are not alone, on a spiritual level.

We are innocent, and we are connected with every living thing. Shifting our beliefs to *this* is what unlocks



the treasure chest. Virtually all of my therapy work is directed toward this end.

### Sophisticated Spins

Now, it may sound easy to find that combination and reverse it. But the mind is ingenious at masking what needs to be done.

Let me share a few "spins" that kick up sediment in the depths of the psyche, and obscure the task at hand.

In a great number of people, Column A is projected. Instead of saying, "I'm not good enough," people turn that belief *outward*. The mind finds an endless list of targets to project the "not good enough" belief onto. For example:

"My ex is such a jerk."

"That politician is absolutely crazy."

"My boss is such a downer."

"My kids never act intelligently!"

"Women are so irrational."

And so on. Once Column A is projected out, the lock is hidden. At that point, the problem doesn't seem to be our own self-defeating thinking. Instead, the problem seems to be that guy over there – and her too – and them.

Column A can even be projected onto objects or systems: the economy, people's bodies, that religion, this ethnic group, the weather.

"Taking back" that projection – identifying the "less than" and other guilt-filled thoughts that we're projecting – is key to finding the Column A combination lock. A great deal of almost every therapy session of mine is spent trying to help people identify and undo that projection.

Another set of spins is even more sophisticated. Some people work very hard to resolve one column, while keeping the other in place. This is somewhat common along the spiritual path.

For example, many of the "helpers" in the world have done a great job unlocking Column B, while keeping Column A locked tight.

These people see themselves as deeply connected to those around them. They see all of us as one spiritual family. They give lovingly to those in need, knowing that such giving is aligned with their spiritual nature.

However, these people may, at the same time, harbor a deep sense of unworthiness and guilt about themselves. I'm sure that you know some people in this situation – loving, giving, and kind to everyone except themselves.

If you were to look closely at these folks' combination locks, you might find that Column B is largely unlocked, while Column A is sealed tight. When I have clients in this situation, I encourage them to focus all of their efforts on self-acceptance, self-forgiveness, and ultimately self-love.

A rarer version is the person who has largely unlocked Column A, but has kept Column B in place. These people have a great deal of self-respect; they are kind to themselves. But they see themselves as disconnected from the rest of humanity.

These people tend to isolate themselves. They may have great philosophical, intellectual, or artistic gifts. But they see themselves as different and unique – separate from the people around them.

Some of my gifted clients are in this position. For them, I encourage them to focus all their energy on helping and supporting others. As they begin to do so –

through volunteering or other forms of service – they begin to see that they are not so "terminally unique." They begin to feel a deep similarity to those around them. And they learn about the great healing power of giving.

Ultimately, our task is to continue to find and unlock *both* of these locks –

beliefs that we are inadequate, and beliefs that we alone. Beliefs that we are "less than," and beliefs that we are separate. Beliefs that something is wrong with us, and beliefs that we are different.

In truth, we are spiritually innocent, and we are spiritually connected. Embracing this new combination unlocks an endless treasure.

As always, thank you for your interest in my newsletter. I invite you to share it with any friends who may be interested. And I welcome any questions that you may have.

Blessings,

Dan Joseph

<http://www.DanJoseph.com>

In truth, we are spiritually innocent, and we are spiritually connected. Embracing this new combination unlocks an endless treasure.

Dan Joseph

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### **Love Bomb for YOU, Dear Reader:**

You are not only "good enough" and "not alone" –  
**You are a unique embodiment of Universal Love!**  
**May you remember the Truth of your awesomeness and feel the power of Love & Joy today and always!**

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## Daily Word

*I release fear and allow God's blessings  
to flow into me.*

When I want to de-clutter, I sort through my clothing and other belongings and get rid of any items that I no longer like or use. Letting go of things may be difficult. But I challenge myself to create space.

I also take regular inventory of my thoughts, actions, and commitments. They serve specific purposes in my life, so if they are not working for my highest good, I let them go. I spend time in meditation to strengthen my power of discernment and know what is mine to release. I make room for new insights and experiences that usher God's good into my life. I release what holds me back, and I open myself to future blessings.

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## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Self-Empowerment is published quarterly (4 issues/year)  
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief: Rev. Jill Sabin Carel  
Editor: Michael P. Tunney  
Agape Interfaith Ministries  
Web: [www.AgapeInterfaith.org](http://www.AgapeInterfaith.org)

Subscriptions are available without charge.  
Tax-deductible donations are gratefully received through  
Paypal to [Jilleroni@Juno.com](mailto:Jilleroni@Juno.com).

To be added to the Self-Empowerment email list: Email your name and request to be added to the quarterly email distribution list to [Jilleroni@Juno.com](mailto:Jilleroni@Juno.com). Newsletters can also be found on the [www.AgapeInterfaith.org](http://www.AgapeInterfaith.org) website.

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Sholom Park, Ocala, Florida August 2016

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