

# Self-Empowerment

Spring 2013

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

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## A New Expression of Me

I hope you are having a happy and healthy New Year 2013 so far! I am excited to be embarking on a new chapter of my life with the start of this year. As I shared in the Winter issue, I am now happily retired from 37 years of fulltime work for the City of Philadelphia. As the Grateful Dead sang, "What a long strange trip it's been."

Looking back, I could believe that I transformed from a sow's ear into a silk purse. Ha! Actually, through a slow step-by-step process of psychological work and spiritual practice, I believe that I am a better expression of me than ever before. This old girl just gets better and better!

### New Year, New You?

The advertisement for a local gym says, "Want a new you for 2013??? Then take advantage of our New Year Specials for a New Body, New Health & New Lifestyle!"

Ahhh – promises, promises. . . . If I take them up on their offer, I might be successful at sculpting a better version of this 59-year-old body, but I don't expect I'd get a *new* me. Though, maybe a toned-up tuned-up body wouldn't be a bad idea after many years of sitting in front of a computer.

### My Heart's Desire(s)

I have been extremely fortunate to have a history of so many wonderful friends and teachers who have supported me directly or indirectly in opening to my heart's desire.

Twenty years ago I joined with several women entrepreneurs to form a *Wishcraft* (not witchcraft) group to support and inspire one another. It was through that joining with Dr. Mary Brady, Susan Couvreur, and Diane Stanley that this *Self-Empowerment* newsletter was born. I was originally going to call it *Team Spirit* because I thought that it would take a team approach to grow in the psychological and spiritual ways that I was captivated by. It was co-worker Mike Tunney who steered me to the Self-Empowerment title, and has continued to offer me his invaluable editing skills since the beginning.

There have been many others along the way who have had a great impact on my career and avocation decisions along the way. I am extremely grateful for each and every one of them, even the more challenging ones. Read *Thank You for Being Such a Pain: Spiritual Guidance for Dealing with Difficult People* by Mark Rosen if you are not aware of the growth and learning opportunities that annoying people can offer us.

Last year I attended The Language of Life Workshop by Dr. Terrie Lewine of the Back to Life Wellness Center. Skills of Non-Violent Communication (NVC), also known as Compassionate Communication, were shared. Several of us have continued to meet regularly to deepen the practice. I am grateful for the expanded awareness and presence that it brings to my life. (See page 5 for contact info for Back to Life.)

The people at Unity's Daily Word have continued to give me permission to reprint a message that inspires me, for which I am extremely grateful. (See page 6.)

### In this issue

Lee Ann Etscovitz and Joseph Anthony have each been on their individual journeys to listen to and follow their hearts' desires. It was not easy for them to find and express their hearts' desires for very different reasons.

Even if the challenges in your life are or were nothing like the challenges of these two courageous individuals, I hope that you find something in their offerings to inspire and support you in your journey.

For the past 20 years I have been blessed by this opportunity to share with you through this newsletter and various Self-Empowerment & Agape events. (See page 5 for workshop and study group announcements.)

I value opportunities to refine our character, develop our talents, and contribute our unique gifts toward a greater good in which to live.

I hope to see some of you at upcoming events or to hear from you through email, phone, or regular mail for feedback, questions, suggestions, ideas, or articles. I appreciate hearing from you.

Peace and Blessings in this new year and always.

Your fellow traveler,

*Rev. Jill*

**Excerpt from the introduction to  
“Let the Dandelions Grow:  
A Poetic Portrait of a Transsexual Journey  
and the Human Condition”**  
by Lee Ann P. Etscovitz

One could say that I have spent my whole life looking for my voice as a person, not just my voice as a poet. This does not mean that I have not been able to speak. I have used words like any human being uses words, for a variety of reasons and in a variety of situations, words that have contributed with varying degrees of effectiveness to my handling of the everyday world in which I live and work.

The loss of voice to which I am referring is more laryngitis of the soul than of the larynx itself. In fact, it may very well be that all human beings, from the time they are born, whether consciously or not, are in search of their inner, spiritual voice. Such a voice gives expression to one's very being, to one's sense of self, to one's hopes and dreams, and to one's pain and suffering.

Too often that inner, authentic voice which we may finally find, or which we may at least begin to identify and attempt to express, is not fully accepted in one's immediate social group or even in one's particular society as a whole. The normal, that is, initial laryngitis of the soul, which we all have to overcome if we are to give greater meaning to our personal lives, is aggravated and often worsened by convention, prejudice, intolerance, racism, and even outright bodily harm, or at least the threat of it. Unfortunately, diversity is not always accepted.

The impetus for much of my poetry, therefore, is this loss of one's inner voice, or laryngitis of the soul, often aggravated by a conflict with one or more groups, beginning most notably with one's family. Too often a person does not fit into his or her own family's expectations, but out of a wish to be accepted, if only superficially, he or she opts to hide his or her true, authentic self. The problem is that, with an ongoing sense of being hidden and thus invisible, the repressed individual feels like a walking dead person with a feeling of intense and depressing emptiness.

Attempts to cope with such a feeling are sometimes misdirected and take an individual into various forms of self-destructive behavior, such as alcoholism, drugs, overeating, sexual promiscuity, bad relationships, even suicide. Such options are often symptoms of what I have been referring to as a very severe case of laryngitis of the soul, that is, the loss of one's inner voice, the loss of one's true sense of self.

My lifelong search for my own inner voice has really been an attempt to hear the sounds of my own heart. I have refused to let the noise of the world drown out an inner voice that speaks to my very existence as a human being, to my relationship with myself, and to my relationship with the rest of the world. My inner voice is the core of my very being, and it represents something that money and power cannot buy. It represents an inner wealth and a real sense of empowerment, regardless of economic difficulties, physical threat, and social rejection.

Such challenges are a real test of one's character, sometimes to the point of despair, but when a person can truly meet the most challenging test of all, that of overcoming laryngitis of the soul, it is then that such a person, armed with a fundamental sense of self, can meet the challenges of life, and meet them with a deep sense of inner dignity and self-respect.

The challenge is to hear myself, to recognize and accept my own voice when I hear it, to hear the melodies that capture my essence as a person and which cry out to be sung. I then have a chance to become the singer, the voice, the poet of my whole person and of whatever it is I am trying to express, in this case the female person I was meant to be and whose identity is simply part of the human condition.

*Following are 3 poems from Lee Ann P. Etscovitz's  
book "Let the Dandelions Grow"*

## **Heroes**

I am a hero  
to myself,  
and that is all that matters  
in the long run.

I have climbed  
the mountains of my life,  
have trekked across  
the rugged terrain  
of my emotions,

have swum through oceans  
of pent-up tears,  
and have risen  
from the depths of grief  
to fly in the sky  
of self-belief.

Yes, I am a hero to myself,  
but I also have other heroes  
to inspire me.  
Every person

who faces inner demons  
and engages  
the forces of darkness  
in soul-deep combat  
is my inner hero.

The inner hero always sees  
life's deepest mysteries,  
for as the inner journey  
shapes the outer quest,  
it is the inner hero  
who meets the outer test.

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## A Prayer

This is a prayer  
to the Unseen Powers  
that move over and above us,  
through and amidst us.

Grant us the strength  
to see in our struggles  
the emergence  
of a special wisdom,

a wisdom  
born of pain and suffering,  
of risk and trust,  
of courage and persistence,  
of caring and reaching out,

a wisdom  
that yields a deeper knowledge  
of who we are  
in all our manifestations,

a wisdom that helps us handle  
the forces of darkness  
that sharpen our view of  
Reality.

Let us reach down  
into the depths of our souls  
to do the soul work  
our lives demand of us,  
that we may learn in our lifetime  
the meaning of existence,  
individually  
and communally.

And let us remember  
that the journey  
into the fullness of life  
begins with every sunrise,

with every awakening of the soul,  
and with every step into the  
Unknown.

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## I Buried You

I buried you  
alive,  
but you refused  
to die.

I buried you  
before we really met,  
before I recognized  
your beauty,  
your soul,  
your hopes and dreams.

I buried you,  
because I never knew  
that God ordained  
your presence on this earth,  
that you were meant to be,  
to be with me.

And so now,  
I want to resurrect  
your life,  
to greet you with open arms,  
to welcome you back  
from the living dead.

Yes,  
your death has been  
a living death,  
for all along  
I have courted you  
secretly,  
saying, "Hello!"  
when no-one,  
except maybe God,  
was looking  
or listening.

Perhaps now,  
somehow,  
we can live  
and die  
together,  
you and I,  
living openly as one,  
till God's work with us  
is truly done.

Lee Ann P. Etscovitz is a professor, marriage and family therapist, poet, and an articulate communicator of the transgender/transsexual experience. Her book *Let the Dandelions Grow: A Poetic Portrait of a Transsexual Journey and the Human Condition* is available through [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).



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## Your Heart's Desire

Excerpt from the introduction to  
"Following Your Heart's Desire: How to Live the  
Life You've Always Dreamed of"  
by Joseph Anthony

You were born, as the great poet William Wordsworth tells us, "trailing clouds of glory." How could it be otherwise? You are a child of God. What that means is you have the powers inside of you that are truly super powers, utterly miraculous, and utterly endless. They are God given powers – to create and to manifest, to imagine and to build. You were born with a purpose – hand-picked by the Infinite Source of Supply. It is a purpose you are free to follow or not. If you choose to follow it you will live in heaven right here on earth. You will shine like the sun and help the world to shine more brightly. You were born to shine.

And there's more.

The talents and gifts you possess are woven together with your dreams. One could say they *are* your dreams. Your talents and gifts can lead you to discover your dreams and your dreams can help you discover your talents and gifts. You were born to express and to share these gifts and talents with the world, and nobody else can do that for you. I'll say it again: You were born to shine.

So stop a moment, wherever you are, and stand up. Say these words out loud. Rise up and claim them as your own:

*I am a child of God. I have a song in my heart that is mine and mine alone, and I will not let it die within me unsung. I am worthy of all abundance and prosperity, for I am an heir to the Kingdom of God. I am ready to sing. I am ready to claim my dreams. I am ready to live my Heart's Desire.*

"OK," you may be saying, "Now what? What do I do? I haven't a clue what my Heart's Desire is." Or

perhaps you are saying, "OK, I know what I want to do, but it's crazy. I'm too old or too young. There's no way it will work!" You might be saying, "OK. I totally identify with ... that affirmation. I believe it to be true. So what do I do next? I am ready for the adventure. Let's get going!"

You might also be feeling a slow, gradual burning sensation in your chest or your guts. It might be in your fingers or your face. Something might be welling up within you – a cry, a song, aching to be sung or spoken. A sudden unsteadiness has settled in your limbs – you might be trembling. You might feel alive for the first time ever in your life. You might feel afraid.

You might sincerely feel that you haven't a clue what your dreams, gifts, or talents are. You might truly believe that you do not have any. You might believe that you do not have a dream. You might truly believe you never had a dream – any dream.

However you feel, you are not alone. I have felt all of these things at one point or another as I began my journey living my Heart's Desire. In fact, everyone who lives their Heart's Desire feels them along the way in some variation or form.

So fear not. We will go together to discover your Heart's Desire, because the very fact that you are alive, with a pulse, means God has a plan for you. This book will help you discover that plan. It will be a source of companionship and encouragement.

I have been there and have come out the other side of the fear, the doubts, and the confusion, and I am shining. You can do the same.

*Joseph Anthony is a teacher, writer, musician, songwriter, storyteller, certified life-coach, certified self-esteem specialist for children, an educational consultant, and an ordained minister. He leads weekly Kirtan (chanting) at a Unitarian Church at 6900 Stenton Ave in Philadelphia on Sunday evenings. He also offers healing work with Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT).*

Visit Joseph's inspirational blog at <http://blog.thewonderchildblog.com/> Buy his book "Following Your Heart's Desire." Contact him at [JosephAnthony@thewonderchildblog.com](mailto:JosephAnthony@thewonderchildblog.com) or P.O. Box 1302, Roslyn, PA 19001

A human soul may be thought of as an opening through which Infinite Energy is seeking a creative outlet.

Emmet Fox

# Empowerment Resources

**Rev. Rhetta Morgan**, the founding minister of Ecclesia Spiritual Center, an Interfaith Community, leads a Sacred Gathering every 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday evening in East Oak Lane. In addition to officiating as an Interfaith Minister at life events such as weddings and funerals, she offers Soulful Spiritual Counseling in person or by phone. Rev Rhetta's divine gift of music is combined with emotional depth to help individuals find their True Voice. For more info call 267-262-1079 and visit [EcclesiaSpiritualCenter.com](http://EcclesiaSpiritualCenter.com)

**Rev. Eileen Santos** is a spiritual artist, seer, healer, teacher, and minister dedicated to bringing healing and wholeness to her clients; helping them remember the infinite loving, divine sacred beings they truly are. Eileen offers spiritual readings, healings, coaching sessions, lectures, workshops, and a suite of wellness products that help you connect with your soul life lessons, stay centered, and can help you manifest wholeness and purpose in your life. Eileen uses a hands-on energy healing technique that focuses on cleansing and rebalancing the chakras; helping you release stress, anxiety, old traumas, and emotions that sometimes are debilitating to our ability to live a joyful life. For more information on Eileen's services and products, please visit her website at: [www.PortraitsOfYourSoul.com](http://www.PortraitsOfYourSoul.com) or call 302-757-9939

**Dr. Terrie Lewine, The Back to Life Wellness Center**, offers personalized Network Chiropractic care, group workshops, couples mediation, and individual coaching sessions using Nonviolent Communication (NVC) principles, also known as the Language of Life. Her mission is to provide and teach people sustainable health practices which add to their well-being. Contact Terrie for more info or to schedule a consultation at 215.928.8898 or online at [www.getbacktolife.org](http://www.getbacktolife.org)

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The Back to Life Wellness Center will be hosting:  
**"What's My Trance?"**  
**an introduction to the Enneagram workshop**  
**by Rev. Jill Sabin Carel**

April 20, 2013 10am-4pm  
208 Fairmount Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19123  
\$45 suggested donation

Space is limited to 15 participants.  
Call 215.928.8898 to register

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# SPRING FUNDRAISER



Hello, Friends! Happy Spring!

Many of you have responded generously to our annual Spring Fundraiser. This is the time of year that our readers are encouraged to send a voluntary contribution to help cover the cost of publication and other ministry endeavors. For the cost of just one meal at a local restaurant, you can make a huge difference in supporting the ongoing work of this ministry.

This is a golden opportunity to say "yes" to the cycle of Giving and Receiving. Take a minute right now to write a check payable to **Agape Interfaith Ministries**, donate online, or feel free to send a book or two of postage stamps, which also give great support. Your help truly does make a difference. Whether you send \$5 *or more*, every bit of support makes this sharing of inspiration possible.

**Thank you for your support!**  
**Blessings to you!**

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Reader Response Coupon

Thank you, *Agape Interfaith Ministries*, for sharing this publication of *Self-Empowerment*.

Here is my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Checks payable to *Agape Interfaith Ministries*)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your donations to Agape Interfaith Ministries, 1100 Friendship Street, Phila., PA 19111 or donate online via [www.AgapeInterfaith.org](http://www.AgapeInterfaith.org). Thank you!

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## Divine Wisdom Study Groups in NE Philadelphia & South Jersey

**Spiritual study group meetings led by Rev Jill**

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month, 1-3pm in Mt. Laurel, NJ  
and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday evening, 7-9pm in NE Philadelphia

Share wisdom insights and their application in our lives  
for less suffering and more joy.

Email [Jilleroni@juno.com](mailto:Jilleroni@juno.com) or call 215-742-0552  
for details and location.

## Daily Word

*A new me is being revealed each day.*

An ending to something meaningful in my life may come as a surprise or as a dreaded outcome. When I hear or think the words, "It's over," I may feel confused or even hopeless. Yet whether anticipated or not, an ending is also a chance for a new beginning, an opportunity for a fresh start.

When a relationship or a job has run its course, or a way of life no longer suits me, I make a new choice. Success comes as I learn from my mistakes, pick myself up, and begin anew. I turn within to release thoughts of the past, and I am encouraged by the love and wisdom that springs forth from the presence of God within me. As I rely on God, I discover all I can enjoy and accomplish in life. A new me is being revealed each day.

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Agape Interfaith Ministries  
1100 Friendship Street  
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Love

Sent to you with  
Love & Blessings

**The mission of Agape Interfaith Ministries is to encourage, support and inspire a deepening conscious relationship with Divinity for the greater experience of wholeness, abundance, love and peace. We serve to elevate consciousness through individual and group educational activities, and community service.**