

Self-Empowerment

Summer 2003

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

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LIVING LOVE

(Being an Inlet and Outlet of Love)

We have heard the zillions of songs that tell us that love is all we need and that love makes the world go 'round. Books, tapes, lectures, workshops, and sermons repeat the message that love is the bottom line of life itself.

Sadly, advertisers use and abuse our need for love by implying that the purchase of their product or service will bring us the love we need. And so, there is much confusion about what love is and how to "get" it.

There can appear to be different *kinds* of love, such as romantic love (Eros), brotherly love (Philos), and spiritual love (Agape). Our egos have tried to analyze, define, classify, compartmentalize, limit, quantify, and otherwise take something as essential as love and pin it to a board with little name tags in a vain attempt to control it. But, you know what – no matter how you slice it and dice it, the *caring* that love is will not be bewitched, bothered, nor bewildered. Love's expressions may change, but love is eternal, powerful and healing. It is not subject to our ego dynamics. Despite any circumstances that you may have suffered, only love prevails.

The truth of our being is that each of us is a natural inlet and outlet of love. Our direct experience of that basic truth is determined by the level of awareness we bring to noticing the *evidence* of love. So the purpose of this message is to "stretch the tent" of our awareness so that we can experience more of the love that is already there in our lives, just waiting to be noticed by us.

We have much to gain by noticing the presence of love. We benefit physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually from love. We become healthier and energized by the awareness of the flow of love in our lives.

But you've got to "let it in" in order to receive the benefits. Have you ever met someone who suffered from shutting out love? I am reminded of the characters in the classic movie "It's a Wonderful Life". Audiences get to see what the people of the town would have been like without the empowering respect and generosity of George Bailey in their lives. That movie effectively teaches the lesson of the miracle of love.

Let's take a fresh look at expansive ways to be more aware of giving and receiving love to experience Love's

Presence. By looking at the ways in which we are indeed inlets and outlets of love, we can set an intention to open up to an even greater flow.

Signal in, Sound out

Think of a radio. A radio can be tuned in to any of a number of radio stations, depending on what's available in the area. Although I do not understand *how* a radio works, it isn't necessary to understand how it works in order to use it. After plugging it in or putting in batteries, just turn it on, dial in a station and adjust the volume. Possibly extending and changing the direction of the antenna might affect the clarity of sound. A selection can be made of music, topical discussions, news, weather, traffic, or sports. I am pleased that my "understanding" of the mechanics of the radio is not necessary to the enjoyment of what the radio can do for me. I know that the invisible radio waves all around me are somehow "picked up" by the radio and made audible, one station at a time.

In the same way, love does not require our understanding of how it works in order to enjoy its benefits. We have the ability to learn from others who have discovered the benefits of giving and receiving love and doing what works.

A radio is designed to receive signals and give an output that gives voice to the transmitted signal. Similarly, depending on what ideas and thoughts we are attuned to, our "output" will give voice to "something." We then communicate what we think. If the signals we are tuned into are fearful, it follows that the output (our words and actions) will be fear-based. On the other hand, by tuning into love, we can receive the benefits of that input, pump up the volume and broadcast something that is love-based.

Ready for some fun? Here is a list of ways that you might experience being a good "radio of I-o-v-e."

1. Insert batteries or plug in: Be sure to nurture your connection to the Source. Meditate, reflect, do mindful breathing exercises, eat healthy foods, engage in supportive physical activity, etc. Practice self-love. Listen for guidance from your Higher Self. Pray. Connect with a community of positive-intentioned individuals.
2. Tune in a station: Obtain and maintain dominion over your choices in life. Honor your freedom of

choice, bringing your attention to what you value. Make healthy choices. Select from choices that resonate with what you want to have more of in your life. Expose yourself to purposeful and positive input.

3. Adjust the antenna: Notice what you value and give your attention and affection to. Is it a strong signal or a weak one? What you focus on grows stronger, so prioritize your life. Aim your antenna in the direction that fulfills your purpose. Notice when your reception is clear and make necessary adjustments to bring clarity to your activities. Practice your willingness to receive. Get a clear signal.
4. Make sure the speaker works: Don't hide your gifts. Share your time, talent, and treasure appropriately with those around you. Take risks in extending that which is yours to share. Express yourself. Check to see if anything is in the way of the speaker; if so, take steps to remove the blockage(s). Do the work necessary to support you in your full expression. Is the volume high enough? Consider pumping up the volume by extending love beyond your current limits.

Letting Love In – Being an Inlet of Love

The world is loving us in countless ways. It is up to each one of us to become aware of that love. Like the radio waves that are invisible to the eye, but experienced as sound when our radio is turned on and tuned in, we can turn on and tune in to the love that awaits our reception. It does not impose itself on us. No flower will jump up and grab us and stick itself under our noses to demand appreciation. We have the freedom to stop and smell the roses – or not.

You might say you are too busy to stop and smell the roses. Well, what is right there, right now, in your experience that is loving you? It could be the floor that is supporting you, the shoes that are protecting and warming your feet, the organs inside of you doing their functions without any effort on your part, the air you are breathing, the bed & blanket & pillow that await your return to gently caress you and nurture your evening's sleep, or even the gravity that keeps you from spinning out into space. Do you see? All the things that you may have taken for granted are indeed granted to you for your miraculous life. You can gratefully accept them as granted with a new and deeper awareness and appreciation of how they are actually loving you now and always. Photographs of your loved ones are loving you, being the material reminder of special moments for you to enjoy over and over, as desired. The food you eat is loving, sustaining and nurturing you. It is indeed living love, feeding the cells of your body. The computer upon which I type this message is loving me right now, taking my ideas and assisting me in

sharing those ideas with others.

How can we boost the signal of our reception of the love signal? What is our antenna? There are specific actions we can take to let more love in: We could ask for help, pay more attention with curiosity, listen better, ask questions, reframe judgments to allow a new understanding in, pray, meditate, and reflect. And, of course, the dynamic duo of gratitude and forgiveness are two most powerful antennae for receiving heaping helpings of love.

With practice, every day increasingly becomes a Thanks-giving day in which we experience being loved by the world around us.

Expressing Love – Being an Outlet of Love

There are many ways that we can expand our experience and awareness of giving love. Some obvious ways of expressing love include a smile, a touch, kind words, preparing a meal, sharing a memory, singing a song, telling a joke, sending a card, giving a hug, and (once again) the dynamic practices of gratitude and forgiveness bless both the giver and receiver.

Respecting another person's integrity is a wonderful and transforming expression of love. Consider this mythic tale of love from the Arthurian stories. Sir Gawain, a knight of the Round Table, agrees to marry Ragnall, a most hideously ugly hag, in exchange for her telling the king a secret that will save him from death. The wedding is held, and all the kingdom has pity for this handsome and gallant knight who is marrying someone so horrible in both appearance and manners for a noble cause. After Gawain and his bride retire to their wedding chambers, she excuses herself to slip into something more comfortable. He climbs into bed, prepared to do his conjugal duty with this creature. Then, out from the curtains steps a stunningly beautiful young woman. Gawain is dumbfounded. "Where is my wife? What have you done to her?" "I am your wife," the woman replies. Then she tells how an evil sorcerer had put a spell on her so she shifted from being rapturously beautiful to being repulsively ugly. "Now," Ragnall says to Gawain, "you have a choice. As my husband, you must decide if you want me beautiful by night for your pleasure, and ugly by day, knowing that people will pity you; or beautiful by day, so people will honor you, and ugly by night, which will bring you no pleasure. Which do you want? You decide." Gawain answers, "This is not for me to choose. I want you to be the way you want to be. It is your choice." With that, the spell on her is broken and she is beautiful all the time. By his honoring of her sovereignty, she was freed her to be her true self. That is *truly* loving behavior – giving back power and honoring the integrity of another. It is a form of forgiveness. It allows another to be who they are, not deciding for them from your limited point of view, what you would have them be. Not an easy thing for human egos, but do-able when we

hold an intention of heart-centered wisdom. With practice it becomes easier. The outcome of heart-centered loving behavior is healing. Indeed, the lover and beloved are both blessed. Imagine all the lives touched by a person who has been accepted unconditionally.

How do *you* extend your love? There are many simple ways to express love that you may be already doing, but did not realize that such actions were part of expressing love. Whether you do the family laundry or bring clarity to some difficult communication, you can begin to see with new eyes the gift that is being extended. See more and more of your actions as acts of love. Miracles will surely follow.

Living Love – your way

The exciting part of loving consciously is developing your own style. Just as there are small radios, boom boxes, fancy stereo systems, etc., there are many different styles of lovers! Each of us is a *unique* inlet and outlet of love. I am not 'George Bailey,' but the love that I give makes a difference. Although I may not have the opportunity to measure the impact of my love, the way George did, I can notice the fruits of my words and actions. I can pay attention to my own internal responses to my choices, as well. I can pay attention and see if my words and deeds bring more peace and joy to myself and those with whom I interact. No, I don't have to be George Bailey or Mother Theresa. I can be the best me by living love, my way. I know you, too, can bring your precious talents and skills to the world in the spirit of love. And you can awaken to a literal paradise of love by paying attention in greater and more expanded ways.

Know what? The ink on this paper is loving you right now! You are obviously lovable, and it is a pleasure to remind you of that fact.

May the infinite and eternal power of Love bring all aspects of your life into harmony.

Speaking of harmony...

In this issue is an interview with the inspirational singer songwriter Lew Doty. Listen to one of his songs on the Agape website (AgapeInterfaith.org) as we enthusiastically await the release of his premier CD "ONE". I truly feel loved by his music.

Have a wonderful summer. Blessings, Love and Hugs!

Your fellow traveler, *Rev Jill*

*You do not make yourself love.
You allow love to enter.
James Redfield*

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.

Agape Interfaith Ministries (AIM) interviews Singer-Songwriter Lew Doty

AIM: When did you first feel moved to write a song?

I have been playing the guitar since I was about 13 years old. I wrote my first song when I was 14 years old. I think at the time I was moved to write a song of my own to express some of the feelings I found difficult to say out loud.

My teenage years were a struggle and music was definitely my outlet and my solace.

This time around things were very different. When I picked up the guitar again after so many years without even owning one, it only took about six months and a song started working its way to the surface. I wasn't trying to write a song. I *had* to write a song. These God-songs have not stopped coming, nor do I imagine they will.

AIM: It sounds like a creative process that is flowing almost effortlessly. Was it always that way?

The process these days is very different from when I was writing music in my teens and early 20s. I *worked* then at writing songs. I studied composition and how to do it to be commercially successful. Now I simply *allow* the songs to come forth. I have often said I don't write these songs; I am simply the first one to hear them. And to be completely truthful, I couldn't stop these songs from coming even if I wanted to. They seem to write me. I have no doubt that God is using me as a vehicle. I feel blessed and am filled with gratitude to have been given this gift.

AIM: Your songs range from spiritual glorification to emotional stories of loved ones. Is there a difference in the process of writing them?

Yes, there is. The songs of spiritual glorification usually come to me very quickly. The emotional stories often take more time. Some melodies sit in my brain for a year and then suddenly in a whirlwind the words will come to me and it all goes together. Other melodies and lyrics seem to be born on the same day already knowing where they belong.

The process still amazes and delights me. It is like giving birth; some labors are more difficult than others, but there is always delight and wonder at the outcome.

AIM: Do all your songs feel very personal to you?

In a word, yes. All my music is a part of me. Even some of the songs that aren't my personal favorites can at the right moment touch me so deeply that I can't hold my emotions in.

AIM: I know that you have performed "house concerts" to help raise the money to make your first CD. What's the story there?

The house concert idea was suggested to me about a year-and-a-half ago. I will tell you that at first I thought it was a terrible idea. I couldn't imagine sitting in someone's home, playing guitar and singing, and then asking people to pay me. But, as usual, God knew better than me. So with a little encouragement on my wife's part I took the plunge and began booking what I like to call prayer concerts. The first one was to occur on a Saturday night and early that morning the hostess called to tell me she had the flu. Well, if that wasn't a sign, I thought, what was? But as it turned out, one of the guests who had been invited to the concert called me and offered to move the concert to her house that night. I did it and had the time of my life. I found that performing my music in such a personal setting was a great experience of sharing for all of us. The house concerts are an exchange in every sense of the word. I have been told that my audience goes home feeling wonderful peace. I know that I go home feeling more connected to Spirit than at almost any other time. They are also just plain fun, at times, too. We laugh, we sing together, we cry. And it's all so good.

AIM: Are all your songs on this upcoming CD or did you have to pick and choose which ones to include?

I now have about 45 songs and only room for 12 on the CD. I had to pick and choose and it was a very difficult choice to make, but one I am thrilled to have had the opportunity to make. I am having an awesome time working on this CD. I go to my producer's studio in Manhattan just about every week and work for long hours and it is fantastic. I am exhausted when I get home, but riding very high. This is what I've always known I was supposed to do, but I allowed circumstances to get in my way for years. Now it is my time and I am loving every moment of it.

AIM: I know you are happily married. Does your wife inspire any of your songs?

I have two or three songs which were written specifically for my wife Susan. However, even when I'm not writing a song specifically for her, she influences greatly what I write. I bounce ideas off her and she is always honest with me. Once, she gave me the title and one line of the song Breathe, and then the rest just seemed to write itself.

AIM: You have written some songs for particular people. Tell me about that.

That is a new experience for me. Sometimes I write a song for someone from my own inner urge. Other times I have been commissioned to write a song, and have been very pleased and moved by the results. I have written songs for the minister of my church, Reverend Carol, and for her husband Greg. I've written songs for two babies born to prayer partners. I have also written a song for a wonderful program called Winds of Change, which was developed by Karen Schumacher as a healing effort after the September 11th event. (See website: windschange.com). I also wrote another "baby" song that has become a standard whenever I am requested at a Christening. Just recently I wrote a song called Namaste which was inspired by a friend's wedding and then played at the wedding of a couple from my church. I am not sure how this process works, only that I set my intention knowing that there is usually a deadline and Spirit sees that it all fits together.

AIM: I am excited to tell people about your music. How can the public hear your music between now and the release of your upcoming CD release?

I have been blessed by receiving much support from members of my church, The Center for Conscious Living, in Moorestown, NJ (phone: 856-722-LOVE web: newthoughtccl.org) and also from people I've met at other churches in the NJ/Philadelphia area where I play. I am still doing prayer concerts and would be delighted to meet some new people and expand my audience. My CD should be finished this summer and will be available for sale. My life is changing in many ways and I am thrilled and expectant, not knowing where it will all go, but sure that more and more good is coming my way.

Listen to a one of Lew's songs on the web – A link is on the Resource page of www.AgapeInterfaith.com.

To book a prayer concert contact Lew Doty at 856-232-1976 or email: Doty712@cs.com.

My desire to love and be loved is a healthy part of my human nature. Giving and receiving love are as natural as breathing out and breathing in. I breathe in the love I need from Source, which is within me and all around me. I breathe out the love others need. I am nurtured both by giving and by receiving. I freely allow others to love me. I myself freely love others.

Julia Cameron, *Heart Steps*

☺ **THANK YOU** ☺
FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Dear Readers,

Thank you for all the contributions and letters of support as a result of the Spring Fundraiser. Your help truly does make a difference. I appreciate you!

Blessings, Rev. Jill

Agape Interfaith Ministries on the Web

Visit the Agape Interfaith Ministries website at www.AgapeInterfaith.org for updated information about classes, workshops and study groups, and other supportive information, or call 215-288-3372. You can also reach me via email at Jilleroni@juno.com.

Daily Word

*God's steadfast love is the source
of all the love in the world.*

People may come and go in my life, and situations often change, bringing me all manner of blessings. But always, the source of my good is the same: God is the creator and giver of all that blesses me.

Through prayer, I perceive the presence of God with undeniable clarity. I may not recognize the answer to my prayer immediately, but when I give my life a closer look, I see the evidence of God's love within every kind and generous act and happening. God is the holy presence underlying all the events that fill my life so richly. My prayers are answered in both expected and unexpected ways.

Love comes to me through many different people and channels. But the unchanging source of all the love in the world is the steadfast love of God.

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Publisher & Editor-in-Chief: Rev. Jill R. Sabin, B.S., RScP

Editor: Michael P. Tunney

Agape Interfaith Ministries, P.O. Box 28307, Phila, PA 19149

Phone: (215) 288-3372 e-mail: Jilleroni@juno.com

Web: www.AgapeInterfaith.org

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Everyone can be great. Because everyone can serve.
You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated
by love.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Healing Affirmation

Deep at the center of my being there is an infinite well of Love. I now allow this Love to flow to the surface. It fills my heart, my body, my mind, my consciousness, my very being, and radiates out from me in all directions and returns to me multiplied. The more Love I use and give, the more I have to give, the supply is endless. The use of Love makes me feel good, it is an expression of my inner joy. I Love myself, therefore, I take loving care of my body. I lovingly feed it nourishing foods and beverages, I lovingly groom and dress it, and my body lovingly responds to me with vibrant health and energy. I Love myself, therefore, I provide for myself a comfortable home, one that fills all my needs and is a pleasure to be in. I fill the rooms with the vibration of Love so that all who enter, myself included, will feel this Love and be nourished by it. I Love myself, therefore, I work at a job that I truly enjoy doing, one that uses my creative talents and abilities, working with and for people who I Love and who Love me, and earning a good income. I Love myself, therefore, I behave and think in a loving way to all people, for I know that that which I give out returns to me multiplied. I only attract loving people in my world, for they are a mirror of what I am. I Love myself, therefore, I forgive and totally release the past and all past experiences and I am free. I Love myself, therefore, I Love totally in the now, experiencing each moment as good and knowing that my future is bright, and joyous, and secure, for I am a beloved child of the universe, and the universe lovingly takes care of me now and forever more. And so it is.

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A Course in Miracles study group

Open your mind and heart to the consciousness and experience of miracles. Share in the peace and joy that results from changing your perceptions.

When: 1st & 3rd Sundays, 7:30 - 9:00 PM

Where: Northeast Philadelphia - Soon to be held in new location. Call 215-288-3372.

Cost: No fee

Never Underestimate the Power of Prayer

This is a true story. A local church pastor had a kitten that climbed up a tree in his backyard and then was afraid to come down. The pastor coaxed, offered warm milk, etc. The kitty would not come down. The tree was not sturdy enough to climb, so the pastor decided that if he tied a rope to his car and drove away so that the tree bent down, he could then reach up and get the kitten.

He did all this, checking his progress in the car frequently, then figured if he went just a little bit further, the tree would be bent sufficiently for him to reach the kitten. But as he moved a little further forward, the rope broke. The tree went “boing!” and the kitten instantly sailed through the air – out of sight.

The pastor felt terrible. He walked all over asking

people if they’d seen a little kitten. No. Nobody had seen a stray kitten. So he prayed, “Lord, I just commit this kitten to your keeping,” and went on about his business.

A few days later he was at the grocery store, and encountered his next door neighbor. He happened to look into her shopping cart and was amazed to see cat food. This woman was a cat hater and everyone knew it, so he asked her, “Why are you buying cat food when you hate cats so much?”

She replied, “You won’t believe this,” and told him how her little girl had been begging her for a cat, but she kept refusing. Then a few days before, the child had begged again, so the Mom finally told her little girl “Well, if God gives you a cat, I’ll let you keep it.” She told the pastor, “I watched my child go out in the yard, get on her knees, and ask God for a cat. And really, Pastor, you won’t believe this, but I saw it with my own eyes. A kitten suddenly came flying out of the blue sky, with its paws outspread, and landed right in front of her.” Never underestimate the Power of Prayer.

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“Miracles” P.O. Box 1000, Washingtonville, NY 1099
email: jon@miraclesmagazine.org 845-496-9089

Agape Interfaith Ministries will have a new home this summer! Be on the lookout for the new address in the Autumn issue of Self-Empowerment. Exciting changes are happening! Blessings of the season!!

Agape Interfaith Ministries
P.O. Box 28307
Philadelphia, PA 19149

All we need to do is allow more joy and love into our experience. We need to really choose it, to allow ourselves to feel it, paying attention, choosing to be alive and to be kind; allowing ourselves to feel and to be nurtured by the natural order of the Spirit of God. When we choose and allow it, the dramas fall away and dissolve.

Patricia Sun