

Self-Empowerment

Winter 2010-2011

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

Vol. 18, Number 2

A publication of  Agape Interfaith Ministries

MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE

Whenever I see an advertisement that claims that an item for sale is “life changing” – I groan! Whether an ad for a book, a workshop, or a diet, the seductive description of the proffered item being “life changing” has become a trite buzz-phrase that panders to a hungry audience of individuals who wish something could do the magic that the ad promises. The reader thinks, “If I could go to that life changing conference I would finally make that leap of faith that would turn my life around!” It may well be a valuable item or experience that could inspire or motivate change, but I am reminded of the joke:

How many psychologists does it take to change a lightbulb? Answer: One, but the bulb has to really want to change!

Well, we are like that lightbulb, seemingly needing a force from the outside to change us, but it will work only if we really want to change.

Do you really want to change your life?

The question that looms large in my mind is whether the people who want a life changing experience are really willing to change. I think most of us would like to have more pleasant circumstances without having to go through the discomfort of thinking or behaving in ways that are new, foreign, or outside our comfort zone.

There are, however, many choice points in our lives when the decisions we make could change the direction of our lives.

Have you heard the story of the two wolves?

*One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, “My son, the battle is between two ‘wolves’ inside us all. **One is Evil.** It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. **The other is Good.** It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.” The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: “Which wolf wins?” The old man simply replied, “**The one you feed.**”*

In this issue we are highlighting the lives of two very different women who fed the “good wolf” and are reaping the benefits of greater joy, fulfillment, and freedom. Their lives are shining examples of different ways to help the “good wolf” win the battle.

There are many ways that *anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego* can dominate our thoughts and lead to pain and suffering. The good news is that in any moment we can choose instead to feed thoughts and feelings of *joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.*

There are different ways to describe that choice. Some call it the battle between good and evil. Others refer to ego vs spirit, or the difference between negative and positive thinking.

It is important to be clear that I am not recommending a defense mechanism of denial. We need to be honest with ourselves and find our path of healing through our challenging issues. Find the support you need to motivate healthy and positive choices so that you can nurture the qualities you want more of in your life.

The willingness of musician Karen Drucker and Certified Laughter Leader Helen Szollosy to change their lives has brought two divine variations of “a joyful noise” to this world. I am thrilled to share their stories with you. May they serve to inspire you to feed the “good wolf” within yourself.

Blessings to you and yours for a safe Winter season filled with music, laughter, and whatever is a joyful noise for you.

Your fellow traveler, *Rev Jill*



Karen Drucker's Joyful Music

*I would like to share my first experience of Karen Drucker. It was a rare East Coast appearance of hers that I attended with a few hundred others. Many were already familiar with her work, and were big fans. My impression was that she was beautiful, intelligent, sensitive, and talented. At the end of the event I purchased her book *Let Go of the Shore: Stories and Songs that Set the Spirit Free*. I was totally surprised and inspired by her journey – from a geeky kid with a negative self-image to the incredible and successful woman she is today.*

I highly recommend her book which shares her fascinating life story (so far) with humor and openness, and includes a CD with 14 of Karen's best songs.

Karen describes herself this way:

When I was a little girl I used to look out of my window and see the Hollywood sign off in the distance letting everyone know that this was that magical place, Hollywood. I was in 7th grade when I heard that the sign had fallen into disrepair due to lack of funds, and they were going to tear it down. Something happened to me that has affected my life ever since. I knew that I had to do something, that maybe my efforts could make a difference. I staged a bike ride around Hollywood, having all the kids from my school get pledges, got the news media to cover it, got a few stars to show up, and raised some money to help save it. Although my little bike ride didn't actually save the sign, it created enough interest and publicity that donations from companies came in, the sign was saved, and I learned a huge life lesson.

What that event did for me was to put me on a path that continues today. I want to be a person who makes a difference, whether it's riding my bike from San Francisco to Los Angeles for AIDS research (The AIDS Bike Ride), walking from Santa Barbara to Los Angeles for breast cancer research (The Avon Breast Cancer Walk), swimming the English Channel (becoming the first American women relay team to make a successful crossing) or singing my songs of positive affirmations, healing and self empowerment.

When I look back on my life, I realize that everything has led me to this path. As a teenager, I was a competitive swimmer who had this secret burning desire to be up on stage. It wasn't until fate stepped in and singer/songwriter Carole King moved onto my street and I became the baby-sitter for her two small

children that my life began to change. She became my role model and I was thrilled when she let me borrow her piano when she remodeled her house. I taught myself to play piano and started writing songs and performing at every amateur night in Hollywood that would take me. I studied acting at Hollywood High School and eventually moved to San Francisco to start an act that combined music and comedy.

For years I made my living being a "singer for hire" performing at any kind of event from weddings (I have sung "Feelings" and "Evergreen" enough to last a lifetime!) corporate parties, doing singing telegrams, and specialty events (I have been a singing mermaid, singing computer, and a singing casket!). It wasn't until I began singing at a New Thought Church and listening to the positive life-affirming messages that everything started to make sense. I eventually became a music director and started writing songs and chants about what the minister's message was for the week. I never would have thought that my first CD of chants would wind up all around the world and be used by so many people on a daily basis.

Now after 13 CD's (2 pop & blues, 11 inspirational), I travel around the country performing and speaking at conferences, retreats, churches, doing concerts, workshops, and organizing my own spiritual retreats. I have been blessed to work with such inspirational authors as Joan Borysekno, Mary Manin Morrissey, Oriah Mountain Dreamer, Alan Cohen, SARK, and have been honored to receive an honorary doctorate from the United Church Of Religious Science.

When I get letters from people telling me that my songs or chants have helped them deal with illness, loss, or just help them center for the day, it validates that I am doing my right work. Just like that little girl who wanted to save the Hollywood Sign, I want to help people and make a difference with my music. It was Mother Theresa who said "We cannot do great things, only small things with love." That is my main intention with my music. If I am making a difference in some small way then I am happy.

Karen Drucker is the author of "Let Go of the Shore: Stories and Songs that Set the Spirit Free", has recorded thirteen CDs, and travels around the country performing and speaking at conferences, retreats, and churches. Visit Karen at www.KarenDrucker.com

See Karen's song/chant "The Face of God" on page 5.

HaHa Helen's Joyful Laughter

Helen Marie Szollosy is known as "HaHa Helen" to her many fans, of which I am one. Often zany, silly, & playful, Helen's purpose and mission is to provide healthy, healing laughter resources (Laughter Therapy, Laughter Yoga, Laughter Wellness) and to uplift & inspire through motivational speaking, singing, and writing.

We've heard people use the expression about making lemonade out of the lemons that come their way, but Helen has said, "When life throws you in a pile of manure, realize it's FERTILIZER, another growth opportunity." Helen sure has had more fertilizer than many of us.

Helen was the 6th of 7 children in a family that included alcoholism, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and a traumatic accident to her oldest sister Dolores, known as Dolly. Life was quite a struggle for this family.

In 1966, when Dolly was only 19 years old, just days away from a rescheduled appointment to have seatbelts installed in her Corvair, a drunk driver hit her car, throwing her head-first from the car, cracking her skull and resulting in brain damage. Up until the accident Dolly had been a surrogate mom to her younger siblings, nurturing young Helen with loving attention. But after 8-year-old Helen saw Dolly in the hospital, wrapped like a "mummy" she had nightmares of Dolly as a monster. When Dolly finally returned home after a year, with seizures and anger flare-ups, the whole family had to adjust to the stranger she had become.

Helen describes in online blogs her journey from a numb existence to opening up to help when she was 28 years old and took the first step of reaching out for help by calling a crisis hotline.

Individual and group counseling led to attending 12-Step programs for Adult Children of Alcoholics and Overeaters Anonymous. She later found and joined a church that gave her a safe and nurturing spiritual community. Helen was given an opportunity to speak at her church. She called her talk "From HELL-IN to H.E.L.E.N." She shared about going from an internal experience of hell to a new incorporated person: happy, energetic, living, evolving, and new! At the end of the talk she called out a cheer –

GIVE ME AN 'H'!, the entire congregation HOLLERED OUT 'H'! I was shocked! They were actually listening to me! At the end of the H.E.L.E.N. cheer - I said: "NICE TO MEET YOU!" – introducing the new ME to myself and the world!

Helen has taken on legal responsibility for 63-year-old Dolly, who is now in a nursing home. Dolly cried upon losing her independence, feeling upset, depressed, and suicidal. Dolly said to Helen, "I feel bad that you have to take care of me." Helen told her, "I'm just returning the favor! Don't you remember when you took care of me as a kid, carrying me upstairs, skipping the school festival, having to stay home and give me a bath because I was sick? I'm just returning the favor!"

I asked Helen about her early retirement at age 50 from a lucrative State government job in 2009 to focus her energies on her laughter business called Lafolot. It was as if several circumstances were pushing and pulling on her at the same time, leading her to feel the need to move on from the cocoon-like safety of her cubicle to a new level of expressing herself in the world. After 22 years of finding her voice and healing past pain, she felt the energy of change, like a new birth.

I have been moved by Helen's life story, entertained and delighted by her wacky videos on YouTube.com, and tickled by her blogged anecdotal adventures in stores & restaurants, spreading healthful mirth wherever she goes.

I asked Helen to share more about herself for this newsletter. She wrote:

I now see my life as a sacred gift and all that happened in my life as having a purpose, bringing me to where I am today: Motivational/Inspirational Speaker, Singer, Writer, Certified Laughter Leader, and the Creator & Owner of LAFOLOT.com. I am truly an independent and empowered Business Woman!

I come from a family of challenges filled with good-hearted people living life to the best of their ability. When I joined my church, it was a time of stretch and change. I joined the choir and performed in a church play. I performed the part of Sonia in the church musical of GODSPELL. I joined local volunteer theatre. I got involved in Ballroom dancing. All these things continued to help me grow with healthy socialization. The ballroom dancing allowed me to learn to LET GO OF CONTROL and ALLOW someone else to lead. I had raised myself and never really played and enjoyed life. So many lessons to learn! So I got to be known as an actress, speaker, and an improvisational silly soul. It was OK to discover and let out my silly side!

An acquaintance of mine did a Laughter Demonstration and as a result I was led to sign up for the training to become a Certified Laughter Leader (CLL). So after 28-½ years in a State Government job I took an early retirement to start a business called "LAFOLOT." I moved from EXISTING to FEELING to

DISCOVERING and MEETING myself and my talents. I moved from having an AH HA! moment to a HA HA Moment!

I go by the name HA HA HELEN, a persona I created for myself and now emulate on a daily basis in my role as a Speaker and Certified Laughter Therapist (Program Facilitator).

I AM Ha Ha Helen! A million WOWs! I see funny and synchronistic messages everywhere I go. Despite the challenges that are a part of day-to-day life, I find smiles, laughs, and heart-to-heart connection that brings joy to me and others often enough to be a healing and fun way to live.

I believe in living our lives to the fullest. I believe everyone has something valuable to share in this world. I feel we all have value and worth. No one is any better or worse than anyone else. We all have a purpose in this world, and by motivating and inspiring others, we can bring out each other's best!

I have a very broad educational background. I took Honors courses in high school, and was in the Honor Society. I am a Charter Member of Phi Theta Kappa, Alpha Nu Omega Honor Society at Harrisburg Area Community College during which I was their first Public Relations Officer. The goal of Phi Theta Kappa is to 'give back' to the community, to volunteer wherever we feel our talents are best suited. It is a wonderful society!

I have an interesting life background, filled with what you might feel were dysfunctional challenges which I now see as GIFTS! I saw, at age 49, the gift of my life occurrences, which brought me to where I am, today! I am in total appreciation of life, living in awe of it all! I am grateful for the challenges I've faced which have made me into the strong, independent, compassionate, confident, self-assertive woman I am today. I am grateful for my talents, know my value & worth and choose to 'give back' to the community, when opportunities arise!

I have an Associates Degree in Specialized Technology – Interior Design from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, PA, graduating in 1979. I attended Harrisburg Area Community College for 5 years part-time from 1985-1990 studying Integrated Information Systems Management. I also took courses in the area of Mainframe development. I have taken Ballroom/Latin/Swing dancing, which was great fun! I do a lot of self-study, being a 'Jane of All Trades'. I have done brick laying for a patio, minor electric work, and plumbing on homes I have owned. I love

gardening and landscaping. I've become quite a business woman, having bought, sold and profited on five homes! Oh, and I have a cosmetology license! I am learning how to say "Hello, How Are You, Thank You and Good Bye" in as many languages as possible – but, it has to be from individuals I meet when I'm out and about. It's more fun that way! I never thought I could learn so many foreign languages, but I am, and I'm making a lot of new friends in the process! It's my way of saying, 'you've come to this country and know your language as well as mine, I can at least make the effort to be cordial in your language! Besides, my grandparents traveled here from Hungary at age 19, I admire them greatly for their courage!

I discovered my unique, torch style, singing voice when I had the opportunity to play the part of 'Sonia' in GODSPELL at Unity Church, Mechanicsburg back in the late 1990s. I performed as an amateur torch singer at Unity Church of Mechanicsburg's monthly coffee house, on two occasions. I've also done 'RAP' performances to advertise events, at Unity Church and on my voice mail messages. Yes, this is quite interesting, I know! ;o)

I dabbled in local theatre getting my first role as: Claudia Procula in Cindy Dugolecki's "Into the Desert."

In May 2008, I became a Certified Laughter Leader with the World Laughter Tour of Columbus, OH.

I wrote a book "Life is a Song" about how we learn prejudice from those who influence us from childhood and how we can overcome intolerance and prejudice by relating to life as a song. It is available on my website and through Amazon.com.

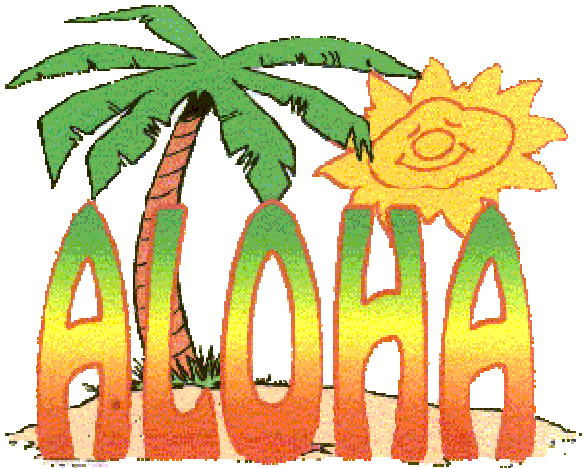
I have many life experiences to share, many gifts to share, I love helping people, meeting people and just getting out with people and having fun! I love learning and trying new things! I love a challenge! ;o)

In the HA HA Spirit of things I AM HA HA HELEN
Living Life in A-MAZE-MENT!
Living **BOLD** and in *Italics*!

HA HA Helen Marie Szollosy
Speaker, Singer, Certified Laughter Leader,
Live Life! Laugh Often!
www.LAFOLOT.com
HELENOFLAFOLOT@YAHOO.COM

See Helen's laughter exercise on page 5.

**Here is a Laughter exercise to improve your wellness,
lift your spirits, energize, relax, and have some fun!**



It may be helpful to look at yourself in the mirror, or do this with one or more buddies to really get the laughter flowing. It may seem crazy at first, but the delight trumps the craziness.

The word “Aloha” is used in greetings and farewells, but it also has a deeper meaning concerning joyfully sharing life.

Aloha Laughter is one of many delightful laughter exercises taught to me and to Ha Ha Helen Szollosy by Steve Wilson founder of the World Laughter Tour. See WorldLaughterTour.com or call 1-800-NOW-LAFF for Certified Laughter Leader training classes.

Take a deep breath, then say “Alo...ha, ha, ha, ha!!”

Let the “ha, ha, ha’s” flow into peals of laughter.

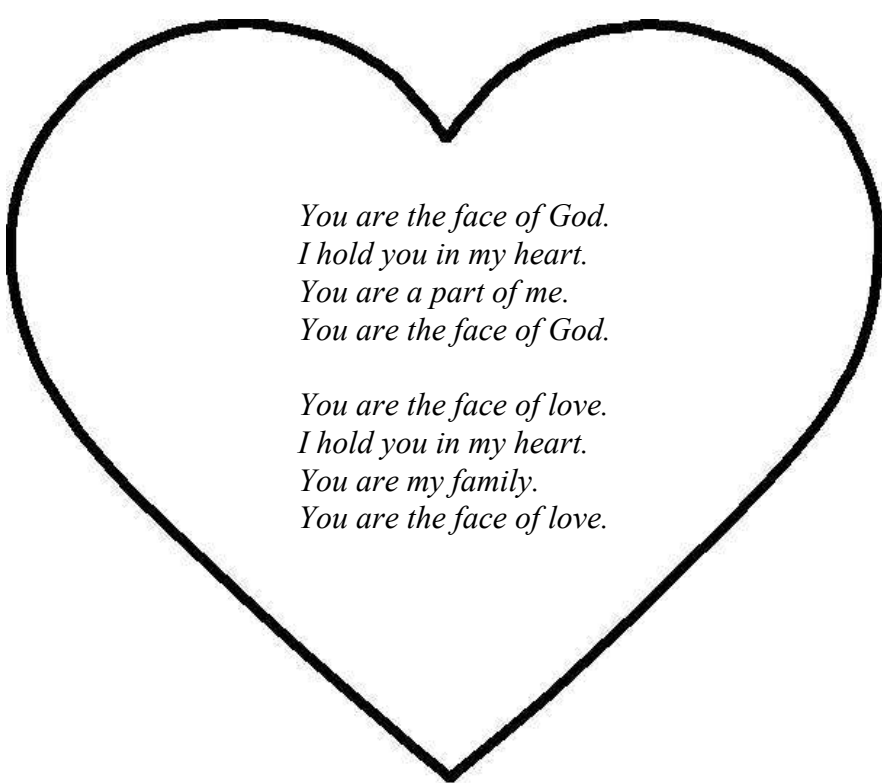
*If there are others doing it with you, look into each others’ eyes
and feel the joyful mirth arise and bubble outward.*

What a wonderful way to feel the Spirit of Aloha and refresh your energy!

“You Are the Face of God”
written by Karen Drucker &
Karyl Huntley.

Buy Karen’s book or CD for
the melody, or just speak
this powerful chant.

Sing / chant it to yourself.
Imagine extending these
words to loved ones. Then
expand your focus to those
who are “challenges” or to
“strangers.” Begin to
recognize the face of the
Divine everywhere.



*You are the face of God.
I hold you in my heart.
You are a part of me.
You are the face of God.*

*You are the face of love.
I hold you in my heart.
You are my family.
You are the face of love.*

Daily Word

I recognize and accept the good that awaits me.

In anticipation of an upcoming change, I may wonder what my life will look like. Will it ever be the same? The truth is that every day is filled with change. Some changes are major turning points and others are small adjustments.

Instead of worrying about what may happen in the moments, days or weeks ahead, I choose to remain calm and confident. I know that good is always present, because God is always present. Attuned to God, I am aware of everlasting good.

I welcome the turning points in my life that bring new opportunities to recognize, accept and experience the good that awaits me.

Reprinted with permission of Unity®, publisher of Daily Word®, Unity Village, MO 64065. One year subscription \$14.95. Customer Svc: 1-800-669-0282. To receive the Daily Word message by email, visit www.dailyword.com

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Self-Empowerment is published quarterly (4 issues/year)
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief: Rev. Jill Sabin Carel, B.S., RScP
Editor: Michael P. Tunney
Agape Interfaith Ministries, 1100 Friendship Street,
Philadelphia, PA 19111 Phone: (215) 742-0552
Email: Jilleroni@juno.com Web: www.AgapeInterfaith.org

Subscriptions are available without charge, and tax-deductible donations are gratefully received to support the printing and mailing expenses of this publication. A suggested donation of \$5 or more per year is invited.

To be added to the Self-Empowerment mailing list, you may call, email, or mail your clearly printed name and address to Agape Interfaith Ministries. Newsletters in pdf can be emailed to you and/or found on the AgapeInterfaith.org website.

Submission of letters, questions and articles are welcome and encouraged. We reserve the right to edit. Please note on any correspondence if you wish your name to be withheld. We publish under One-Time Rights (rights revert to writer's ownership after publication).

Entire contents © 2010, Agape Interfaith Ministries.

Agape Interfaith Ministries
1100 Friendship Street
Philadelphia, PA 19111

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.