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THE MARK

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Living Systems

by Tim Cook

As I've watched my grandchildren learn the concepts and skills they'll need to know to participate in life, I'm often reminded of the early lessons in my own life. Many of the principles and practices that guide me today are gifts that I received from my parents when I was a child. At the time I was learning them I could never have guessed the important roles they would play in my future. I had no capacity to know what I would specifically need to be capable of doing, and my parents didn't either. They did, however, know and teach me that there are principles and laws that govern all life in all situations. They taught me that those who know the laws and live by them can live in harmony with the world.

My dad and my grandfather worked for the Snap-On Tool Corporation, so we always had plenty of good tools to work with. They were my dad's favorite toys and he made sure that his sons knew which way a wrench is supposed to be fitted to a nut and how big a pilot hole has to be for each size of screw. He was legendary for being able to fix anything. And he showed us how to tear down engines and motors, carefully placing each disassembled piece in the order in which it was removed so that we wouldn't end up

with extra parts after we had fixed it and put it back together. When it came to fixing things and using tools, Dad's dictum was, "There's a right way and a wrong way to do everything." It still remains good advice on the mechanical level but it took me many years to unlearn it in some of the other aspects of my life.

One lesson that I have lived by every day for more than 30 years lay dormant in me for many years before it came forward in my consciousness at a time when I most needed it. It was something my mom shared with me about the procedures used in hospitals to avoid mistakes. Mom was a surgical nurse and she was telling me about operations. She said that in the operating room, the staff always did everything in the same order in each and every surgical procedure, even down to double counting all the instruments and sponges both before and after each operation. Mistakes, she said, were avoided by creating an unvarying system of actions to overcome the inattention that sometimes afflicts everyone, but that in a surgical setting, it is a life and death matter. For some reason, that idea made a deep impression on me, even though I couldn't have been more than seven years old at the time she shared it.

It was many years later when

I discovered how it could save me in what proved to be a matter of my personal life and death. God had quite suddenly come into my life after a long dark period of depression and addiction. It was as if the sun had come out in the deep interior of my soul and my mind. I had started going to church and was avidly learning everything I could about God's laws, the principles of life, the spiritual journey and the new life that was being born in me. The arrival of faith, a new, previously unsuspected hope and the great relief from despair were like a breath of spiritual air for my starving soul. But I quickly became aware that my awakened state was unstable and that it came and went unpredictably. Spiritual sleep and awakening came and went and came and went. I loved being awake, but I couldn't stay that way. The worst part of it was that I would only realize that I'd been asleep each time I would wake up. The relief at reawakening was wonderful, but it was quickly followed by the realization that I'd gone back to being a zombie again for the last days or weeks and I hadn't even known it. I could not see it happening when I'd slide back into the waking trance; but each time I woke up again, I would see the terrible price I'd been paying for

living unconsciously. I was literally losing my new life, which I now knew to be my real and only life, and I wanted desperately to learn how to keep it.

My prayers for help led me to adopt a daily spiritual practice. I learned from Ram Dass that I didn't have to be a nun or a monk to live a God-centered devotional life. I simply had to realize my great daily need for personal spiritual food and be willing to create the necessary conditions that would enable me to receive it. I had to completely reorder my life around my hunger for God. That meant making some big changes and letting go of some of my favorite distractions. But the stakes were high. It had become a matter of life or death to me.

I began getting up at five o'clock in the morning and doing about 30 minutes of Hatha Yoga, followed by an hour of spiritual reading and study and then 30 minutes of meditation. By the time I went to work, I was deeply grounded in the spirit and the commute through the congested Denver traffic seemed brighter, shorter and less vexing with each passing week. Life at corporate headquarters became increasingly less stressful and a new feeling of balance and self-respect began to emerge. I knew I was living the life I was made for: God's life.

Things got so good for me that I began to relax. The better I felt, the less I felt the need to continue to get up so early every day. Reading started to become optional and the yoga became more difficult when I


stayed up a little later than usual the night before. My meditation practice became spotty; once a day most days, twice a day some days. But some days I didn't enter the silence at all, especially when I felt too busy and didn't feel like I had enough time. It wasn't long before things fell apart again. Faith diminished, worry returned. Hope disappeared and depression replaced it. Relationships began to fray. One day I realized that, once again, I had forgotten to put God first in my life. I felt guilty and ashamed as I began the difficult process of restarting the regularity of my daily practice. But soon I came to life again and realized what an amazing blessing it is to have such a life-giving practice, and I clung to it like a drowning man holds on to a life preserver ... for a while.

That cycle of off and on spotty practice repeated itself several times before I remembered the lesson that Mom had taught me so many years before. I realized that if I let my devotion to my practice of the presence of God be determined by how I felt on any given day, I would never be able to remain awake to God's presence and would never be transformed. I knew I needed a system that kept my relationship with God first and foremost in my life and that served as a sturdy, unwavering support for my flaccid, undeveloped spiritual will that felt like practicing on some days ... and not at all on others. I knew that my spiritual life, my real life, depended on having a system to support it.

Almost as a bonus, I realized

that my guilt and shame at practicing or not practicing were pretty silly. I wasn't bad if I didn't do my practice—I was dead. It wasn't a question of being right or wrong or good or bad. It was simply: "How do you like to feel, Tim? Feel how you feel when you don't live a life of daily practice. Now feel how you feel when you do. Which way is better? How do you like to feel?" It was clear that I wasn't bad when my practice was irregular—I was stupid. I chose then to create a systematic daily practice that overcame my susceptibility to stupidity. I made a once-and-for-all-time, non-negotiable choice to do a routine spiritual practice every day. I learned to do it the same way, at the same time, every day, just like monks do, and it saved my life.

Take a look around right now. You are experiencing your world through your nervous system, supported by your circulatory system, as a creature that lives in the solar system, in an ecosystem, related to the world by a political system, participating in an economic system and a part of a family system. A list of the living systems and systems for living that support us could go on for pages, but I'm sure you get the point. Life does not live by whim or impulse. It flourishes through systems.

Is your spiritual life haphazard or systematic? True sanity and real life depend on being willing to clearly know the answer to that question. Systems save lives; thanks for the lesson, Mom. It's never too late to learn it. 

Our Prayer Circle

by Barbara Cook

My first encounter with prayer, other than the kind that is formulated and memorized, came at the beginning of the active part of my Spiritual Journey. I phoned a prayer call center for help with a need and immediately I experienced a change; I immediately became calm and centered. I don't recall what the perceived difficulty was, but I do recall God's response. It was *right now*. The call and the responding presence were one and the same. I was stunned. I had prayed most of my early life, but it was to a faraway God who may or may not have heard – I never knew. At that moment, I became aware of the right-now, responsive-to-request God.


I hungered to know more about this very here-and-now God, so a dialog of prayer began. God showed me his caring, his trustworthiness and his desire for personal relationship. Needless to say, the partnership that began there is an enormous part of my life as I continually test myself and commune with God through petitioning prayer. Silent prayer is where God loves me into wholeness and deepens my relationship and awareness. Petitioning prayer has been where I ask and He answers; where I continue to learn to trust His love. It has been a faith-builder for me, and it can be for you as well.

Jesus told us to “ask any thing in my name and it shall be done” and to “pray for one another.” Each Wednesday morning at 9:15, that is just what we do. We gather in a circle of faith and pray over the prayer requests that have been sent in by

mail or put in the prayer box. We pray for our Christian community, for Heaven to come to earth, for our friends, for those who have needs and for those who wish to give thanks.

One day after September 11, one of our members came looking for the prayer circle and was directed to our small but dedicated prayer group. She sat with us and joined in our prayers. She reported that she got much more than she bargained for and that she was touched and amazed that we do actually pray over each request. Through her fresh eyes and the countless other times that this has happened, I am reminded that this circle of prayer, having met consistently for 25 years, has been a huge gift to all who participate.

It is also a center for miracles of love as God's love flows out to touch the lives of the many people we pray for. You can join us in person if you are free for an hour on Wednesday morning. You can also pray with us at home or send in your request for some area of your life that needs God's blessing. It is a rich way to know God.

Fr. Thomas Keating said that Centering Prayer is the best and deepest way to know God and our selves because it is simply pure surrender, but that it certainly doesn't replace other types of prayer. Remember, Christ said that where two or three are gathered in His name, He is there with them. Prayer doesn't change God. It changes us and opens us up to His healing, loving Presence, *right now*. 

CCH Bookstore

September Community Reading

The Untethered Soul
by Michael A. Singer



A lucid, engaging and non-religious introduction to the hidden truths that have allowed people to wake up from hypnosis of life to a new generation of interested seekers of personal transformation.

New in the Bookstore

Birthing God
by Lana Dalberg



Grounded in raw experience and ideal for spiritual seekers and leaders of all faiths, forty women relate stories of Spirit-filled moments that invite you to consider the origins of your own spirituality.

Bookstore and Library Hours
Monday-Friday 8:30 am-3:30 pm
Sunday 9-9:50 am & 11:30 am-12:30 pm

Guidelines for Christian Life, Growth and Transformation

Fr. Thomas Keating, in his seminal work *Open Mind, Open Heart*, lists 42 principles underlying the Christian spiritual journey.

Fr. Keating asks that these principles be read according to the method of *Lectio Divina*.

One principle will appear in these pages each month

32nd Guideline



Beatitude of poverty of spirit
springs from the increasing awareness of our true Self.

It is a nonpossessive attitude toward everything
and a sense of unity with everything at the same time.

The interior freedom to have much or to have little,
and the simplifying of one's lifestyle
are signs of the presence of poverty of spirit.

SEEDS

The Actuality of One "Yes"

In our being there is a primordial yes that is not our own; it is not at our own disposal; it is not accessible to our inspection and understanding; we do not even fully experience it as real (except in rare and unique circumstances). And we have to admit that for most people this primordial "yes" is something they never advert to at all. It is in fact absolutely unconscious, totally forgotten.

Basically, however, my being is not an affirmation of a limited self, but the "yes" of Being itself, irrespective of my own choices. Where do "I" come in? Simply in uniting the "yes" of my own freedom with the "yes" of Being that already *is* before I have a chance to choose. This is not "adjustment." There is nothing to adjust. There is reality, and there is free consent. There is the actuality of one "yes." In this actuality no question of "adjustment" remains and the ego vanishes.

Thomas Merton, *Seeds*, pages 12-13.



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I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you ... Philippians 1:3

Annual Aim: Governance by Michael Begeman

We wish for those at the center
to move ever deeper
together in consciousness,
to work with intensity on and for
their own transformation,
and to strive to assist others
in doing the same
... to expand the circle of involvement
and ownership
by ever deepening the experience
of seva, participation and stewardship.
Board and staff
join the entire community
in holding
the center in awareness
of being one in the Body of Christ.

2012-2014 Two-Year Plan,
The Church of Conscious Harmony

*My soul shall live for Him,
my children serve Him.
They shall tell of the Lord
to generations yet to come,
and proclaim His faithfulness to a people
yet unborn;
'These things the Lord has done.'*

Psalm 22:31-32

The Church of Conscious Harmony (CCH) is managed by a set of principles that are manifested first in the bylaws of the Church, second in the elements of the two-year plan, and third in the daily practice of its staff, volunteer leadership, and members.

The Bylaws

The bylaws begin with the statement of the purpose of CCH:

“The Church of Conscious Harmony exists for the sole purpose of facilitating the spiritual journey for people who want to make God-devotion the center of their lives while living in the ordinary world without the aid of monastery walls. Our aim is to provide the focus, the teaching and the community support required for individuals to grow in self-awareness from the illusion of separate and separative existence to the fully enlightened experience of conscious union with the living God. ... Our basic teaching stands on two legs: (1) the teachings and practices of the contemplative Christian tradition, as presented by Fr. Thomas Keating and others, and (2) the teachings and practices of the esoteric Christian Fourth Way known as the Work, as presented by Maurice Nicoll, G. I. Gurdjieff and others.”

Over the years many suggestions and requests have come to the Board regarding directions that CCH should go, teachings and teachers that should be invited, programs that should be created and offered, groups that should be formed, and so on. From one perspective, all

the suggestions seemed like good ideas, had merit, and could support people's spiritual journey in one way or another. As I spent time on the Board, however, I learned a different way of considering the suggestions. My colleagues would often ask the question “How does this support

and fit with the bylaws?” Sometimes the answer was clear and other times not so. I developed a finer sense of understanding what CCH *was* and what CCH *was not* through these discernment conversations.

God, of course, is bigger and more inclusive than any of us can imagine. If God is Truth and Love, then all spirituality, all religion, all philosophy and all personal practice that is within Truth and Love is within and of God. (God goes *beyond* Truth and Love, but that’s the topic for another article!) But while the universal God includes all, there is usefulness in specialization for a church community – for going deeply into God in a particular way – and the way of CCH is defined by the two legs of the bylaws. The bylaws have thus provided a practical aiming and filtering governance mechanism that provides continuity for the community even as the composition of the Board and church leadership changes over time.

Staying true to these legs has provided stability to the identity of the community and, more importantly, has been transformational for many. Fr. Keating has written: “The Church of Conscious Harmony is a fellowship of Christians devoted to the contemplative dimension of the gospel. ... The community seeks to deepen the contemplative life of its members and the corresponding dedication of works of charity that such a prayer inspires.” And Robin Amis has written: “Austin’s Church of Conscious Harmony is one of the rare churches in the Western

world that makes genuine efforts to recover and then live by the healing truths that gave early Christianity its strength but have since been generally forgotten.”

The Two-Year Plan

The second governance mechanism is the CCH two-year plan. The Board revises this document periodically and primarily uses it as a short-term visioning plan for the Church. The plan begins with a specific wish for the nature of the *community* ...

“We wish to be a contemplative Christian community of practice with

- ... conscious intention
- ... selfless participation
- ... prayerful stewardship
- ... gracious hospitality
- always guided by the Spirit and rooted in eternal love.”

... and then proceeds to outline both wishes and specific plans in the following five areas.

While the specific plans in each area tend to change over the years, the wishes remain relatively constant and, in addition to the bylaws, form guiding governance principles for the Church. For example:

Programs, Services, Ministries, Operations

“We wish ... to serve the deepening of our community’s relationship with God, as householders, through the Work of Inner Christianity and the Contemplative Christian Way ... and that all programs, services, ministries and operations be an embodiment

of conscious intention, selfless participation, prayerful stewardship and gracious hospitality, always guided by the Spirit and rooted in eternal love.”

Membership and Community

“We wish ... to have a vibrant, committed Tenth Man School and an abundant, overflowing Church membership of committed spiritual practitioners who choose The Church of Conscious Harmony as their path of access to a life lived in conscious union with the living God. We wish ... to be a community of participation in the conscious embodiment of life rooted in love.”

Facilities

“We wish ... to manifest stillness and sanctuary, holiness and beauty, for the sacred space we’ve been given.”

Finances

“We wish ... to have a conscious relationship and a spirit of generosity around money, recognizing God as the source of all. We wish to be transformed through the practice of tithing as individuals and as a community. We live the prayer that ‘God’s love has always met and will always meet all our needs. We give freely and receive joyfully. And how blessed we are to simply remember God.’”

Governance

“We wish ... for those at the center to move ever deeper together in consciousness, to work with

intensity on and for their own transformation, and to strive to assist others in doing the same ... to expand the circle of involvement and ownership by ever deepening the experience of seva, participation and stewardship. Board and staff hold the center in awareness of being One in the Body of Christ.”

The importance of these wishes cannot be overlooked; they are more than idle statements. One of the Gurdjieff aphorisms states: “There are two kinds of doing—automatic and doing what you wish. Take a small thing which you wish to do and cannot do and make this your God. Let nothing interfere. If you wish, you can. Without wishing you never can. Wish is the most powerful thing in the world.”

The take-away from this aphorism is the power of forming, creating an emotional relationship with, and staying true to a wish. This is a metaphysical mechanism for having a co-creative relationship with reality. In ordinary life our wishes are short-lived and most are actually handed to us by culture. Given this, a useful question for every person who aspires to living a conscious life is: *What do I really wish for?* Just like the bylaws and statements in the CCH two-year plan, clarity about such statements and wishes in one’s personal life become useful personal governance mechanisms...creating aim and intention in the direction of one’s life.

Daily Practice

This brings us to the third level

of manifestation of the guiding principles for the Church: the daily practice of its staff, volunteer leadership, and members. At this point, governance becomes very personal. Yes, there are the bylaws of the Church and the wishes and plans of the two-year plan, but ultimately the *being* of the Church (or the *field* of the Church as modern science may call it) is generated by and from the collection of individuals that compose it. The Membership section of the two-year plan asks for an “overflowing Church membership of committed spiritual practitioners.” In a community of householders such as we are, what it means to be a committed spiritual practitioner varies from person to person, and from phase to phase of one’s life.

Each of the two legs of the Church has a developmental path of learning, engagement and practice that’s outlined in the *Journey of Transformation* brochure (available in the office or at the visitor’s table after any Sunday service). My journey over 20 years at CCH has looked similar to many others’: learning Centering Prayer; starting, stopping and restarting a daily practice of Centering Prayer; attending Centering Prayer retreats, then staffing them, then leading them; dabbling in the ideas of the Work of Inner Christianity; then attending classes (sporadically, then regularly); then engaging the ideas with others in the community; etc. The bottom line of it all has been a gradual creation, deepening and stabilization

within myself of an intentional, personal Rule of Life.

What is a Rule of Life? This definition from the C.S. Lewis Institute is practical for our use: “A Rule of Life is an intentional pattern of spiritual disciplines that provides structure and direction for growth in holiness. A Rule establishes a rhythm for life in which is helpful for being formed by the Spirit, a rhythm that reflects a love for God and respect for how he has made us. The disciplines which we build into our rhythm of life help us to shed the ‘old self’ and allow our ‘new self’ in Christ to be formed. Spiritual disciplines are means of grace by which God can nourish us. Ultimately a Rule should help you to love God more.”

A personal Rule of Life can take many forms, and will undoubtedly change over time, but has the foundational aspect of being a committed, intentional pattern of spiritual disciplines: what in our community we call our “daily practice.” While the daily practice of many in our community varies, the recommendations have remained the same for many years and are rooted in the two legs of the Church: a daily practice of Centering Prayer, daily study of the Work of Inner Christianity, and some form of service/support to the CCH community.

In contrast to a *personal* Rule of Life, living by a *common* Rule of Life has been a foundational aspect of monastic and other religious communities for over

1500 years. Since its early days, CCH has maintained a structure called the Tenth Man School (TMS), and – among other commitments – all members agreed to live a common Rule of Life. The TMS has recently been reconceived specifically as a community of practitioners who (1) have taken the membership classes and have become formal members of CCH, and (2) commit to following a common Rule of Life that has nine components, namely:

1. Twice daily Centering Prayer practice
2. Daily reading of Scripture
3. Daily reading of the Work of Inner Christianity
4. Daily conscious movement (e.g., tai chi, yoga, walking)
5. Small group participation (in Second Line group and/

or Work groups), as available

6. Commitment to attend Centering Prayer retreats
7. Seva group or YES program participation
8. Tithing
9. Regular attendance at Sunday services

Any member of CCH can elect to be a member of the TMS and follow this Rule of Life. (Starting January 2014, this membership commitment will be made on an annual basis.) Following this common Rule of Life is a serious commitment, and isn't for everyone. But what *is* for everyone is defining and being faithful to a personal Rule of Life. It may be choosing just one, or perhaps a few of the practices listed above that are appropriate to your stage of life. And in doing this, you'll be joining

the greater CCH community of practice, participating in the building up of the mystical Body of Christ. As the C.S. Lewis definition pointed out, participation in a personal Rule of Life will “help us to shed the ‘old self’ and allow our ‘new self’ in Christ to be formed.”

So returning to the topic of governance, a question is before us all: *What governs my life?* For many it is just the circumstances of life. For some with a Real Wish and a hunger for God, however, a Rule of Life can provide the governance mechanism for leading a conscious, intentional life ... making, as the bylaws state, “God-devotion the center of our lives while living in the ordinary world without the aid of monastery walls.”

May it be so for all who read this. ☉

Doing God's Will

Do this, and you will live. (Jesus, in Luke 10:28b)

We often say we would like to know what to do to advance in virtue—

but when the Spirit of God shows us what to do, we often lack the courage to carry it out.

We have a strong feeling that we are not what we ought to be. We see how our burdens grow day by day.

Yet we feel we are doing a lot just by saying we want to be delivered out of ourselves.

Let us count it as nothing if we say we are willing to follow God,
and then do not go as far as sacrificing the things that stop us from walking to God's ways.

Let us not hold the truth captive through our unrighteous halfheartedness.

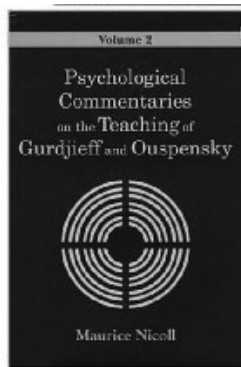
So let us listen to what God inspires in us. Let us test the spirit that is moving in us, to see if it comes from God.

And after we have recognized God, let us stop at nothing to make him happy.

The psalmist does not simply ask God to teach him what his will is—he asks God to teach him to do it.¹

¹*Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path.* Psalm 143:10 (NRSV)

The Complete Fénelon, page 172. François Fénelon was a seventeenth-century French archbishop, controversial theologian and spiritual thinker. His writings have been translated into English and edited by Robert J. Edmonson & Hal M. Helms.



The Work

of Inner Christianity

My Father is still working, and I also am working.


John 5:17

On Living More Consciously

From time to time it is necessary for us to review what we are doing and what is the great idea lying behind the Work itself. We are taught that the 3rd State of Consciousness is our right by birth but we lose it and fall down into the 2nd State of Consciousness or so-called waking state which is very much like falling down from heaven to hell. In this 2nd State we are attacked on all sides by evil 'I's, by evil moods, by every variety of unhappy inner states from which only a sincere act of Self-Remembering can separate us. ... When we view the Work in this light we see it has a supreme and clear aim and that everything said in the Work refers to attaining, to realizing, this aim. But how many of us in the daytime practice inner separation in a practical way in the recurring daily situations of life? So it is a good thing to remind ourselves that in the 3rd State of Consciousness the False Personality loses all its power over us and that we pass into an entirely new field of inner and outer experiences. As a rule we live in the wrong parts of centres but we have to realize as a personal fact that this is the case. Small 'I's take hold of us. We

identify with them and exaggerate their importance and so we are kept in a state of sleep. Now you will find, if you observe yourself, that a great many of these small 'I's are linked closely with the False Personality—namely, with Vanity and Self-Conceit. Have you noticed how it goes in your own case? Suppose at one stroke a magician could remove from all humanity False Personality—can you conceive the transformation that would take place all over the world? Can you imagine how many lies would cease to be told and lived and how many useless activities would straightway end? I think it is not too much to say that a major part of life as we know it would cease to exist. Nor is it too much to say that most people would not know what to do when they were thus purified and freed from Personality. But to be suddenly awakened in this way would rob most people of their very lives. They would not know what to do and who they were. For this reason all awakening must be a gradual process. There cannot be a rude shock but a gradual inner development of understanding through which a man gradually

discards certain states of himself and begins to prefer better states of himself through inner choice. This leads gradually to awakening and when this path is followed it is characterized by the fact that people may have apparently quite by chance real moments in which they are close to the 3rd State of Consciousness and they recognize that they are in some quite new state which is accessible to them and which in ordinary life, when they are completely identified both with themselves and with external events, they do not know.

The first great stage of this Work is to awaken out of sleep. When that is strongly enough established a man knows what he has to sacrifice, what he has to die to, and he becomes able to sacrifice it, to die to it, and then his re-birth begins—that is, real transformation. But for a long time he is between two issues and then he must have great patience with himself and not expect to attain what he has not yet sufficiently paid for. We spoke once about patience as a very conscious thing which has nothing to do with resignation. ... we must try to have a more *conscious* relationship to our thoughts and feelings and a more *conscious* relationship to the effects of other people on us. All this leads to the attainment of the 3rd State of Consciousness, the State of Self-Remembering, or Self-Awareness, or Self-Consciousness. 

Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, pages 922-924. For more information and experience with these teachings, you are invited to attend the Work of Inner Christianity class held every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at The Church of Conscious Harmony.

A Letter from Lama

This letter, which was shared with the congregation during the July 14 service, was given to the CCH pilgrims by a senior resident at the Lama Foundation in New Mexico. It aligns with many of our Church's core beliefs as well as our annual aim of "Gratitude." Please see last month's issue of *The Mark* or www.consciousharmony.org for more information about our Youth Educational Services.

Beloved Church of Conscious Harmony,

As you depart from Lama this summer I want to take a moment and speak my gratitude to you all. I'm so grateful you come as a group and as individuals. Each one of you has a unique presence and amazing gifts to share with us. In my four years of residency here at Lama, CCH has been one of the **BEST** groups of people to come – I'm just going to lay that out there! You all are a gift to me and to Lama Foundation! I pray your connection to Lama lasts a long time and that you all know you are family and Lama is your HOME. Also, thanks for sending such lovely and fabulous Stewards, keep 'em coming!

I am so grateful for the Reconciliation Ceremony you held in the Dome. I go every year (my first memories of it are at the Tipi site years ago) and love and cherish it so deeply. Thank you for creating a container for deep ceremony together, for the beautiful songs (I may ask to record some), and for creating a place of refuge for tired Beings like me! I so honor your path and Christ's Message, so honor your open hearts and receptivity to our participating in Sacred Space. Thank you for including me, it means so much. When you pray, sing, do deep ritual and ceremony all this feeds Lama, The Mountain, The Dome, the Community Energy – thank you for feeding the spirit of this place with your Love, for renewing and honoring this place in all your seen and unseen ways.

This will be my last year residing at Lama. After this I hope to continue serving in all the other myriad of ways one can. Seth and I, Megan, Joe, and Pema will leave in October to transition together and continue our deep commitment and belief in Spiritual Community. It will be a big change – but it seems it's time to move on and see what strange and mysterious seeds we have cultivated in our time at Lama – to see what fruits will come and to be open to whatever the Beloved has in store for us – hopefully to continue to share the fruits we grew and nurtured at Lama with the World – Pray for Us! It's a leap into the unknown. Insha-alla! God Willing, we will stay near in the first year and I can come up to visit next time you come.

I am so grateful for all of the ways you love Lama. Thank you so much for All of it. Thank you to the strong, beautiful, self-aware and caring young adults you are all becoming. Thank you to the courageous, shimmering, supportive elders that hold and facilitate the container for you to all blossom and recognize the Divine in each other.

You have opened one of the (many) doors to my heart and I am humbled and so grateful!

Blessings, Love and Light,

Emma

September Calendar

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

Special Events

One-day Centering Prayer Retreat
Sep 14 8:30 am -4:30 pm
\$15 Bring your own sack lunch

Monthly

Tuesday Enrichment 7:30 pm
Sep 17 Gurdjieff Music

Community Workday
Sep 21 9 am-noon

New Member Class
Sep 25 7:30 pm
(1 of 4 classes)

Song & Silence
Sep 28 10 am-3 pm
\$20 pre-register in the office
Lunch provided

Weekly

Centering Prayer Support Group
Sep 16 7:30 pm
Praxis Center

Prayer Circle
Wednesdays 9:15 am

Contemplative Lunch
Wednesdays noon

Mid-Week Communion Service
Wednesdays 6-7 pm

Yoga
Thursdays 6-7:15 pm
Cost \$14 each session

Work of Inner Christianity Class
Thursdays 7:30 pm

Daily

Weekday Centering Prayer Service
M-F 7-7:35 am in Theosis Chapel

Recordings of services are available
through the Bookstore and online at
www.consciousharmony.org



The Church of Conscious Harmony
A Contemplative Christian Community
7406 Newhall Lane Austin, Texas 78746

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Our Lady of Sorrows

*You yourself,
a sword will pierce
so that the thoughts of many hearts
may be revealed.*

Luke 2:35

Mary's intimate relationship with Christ, her disposition of self-surrender, her alert receptivity, and her promptness in responding to the wishes of the Spirit are the great contemplative virtues.

Mary is the paradigm of those who are manifesting Christ in their individual lives.

Her compassion was rooted in the kind of love that God has for us – a love that is tender, firm and completely self-giving.

In the Ascension Jesus enters with His humanity into the heart of all creation where He dwells everywhere and in everything, visible only to the x-ray eyes of faith that penetrate through every disguise including the greatest of sorrows.

God is reigning despite all appearances to the contrary.

The risen Christ is ever-present.

This is the faith that Mary had when she looked on what was left of her Son and yet saw Him reigning from the cross – the triumph of God hidden in the greatest suffering.

This makes her our companion and support in every conceivable trial.

Thomas Keating, *Awakenings*

