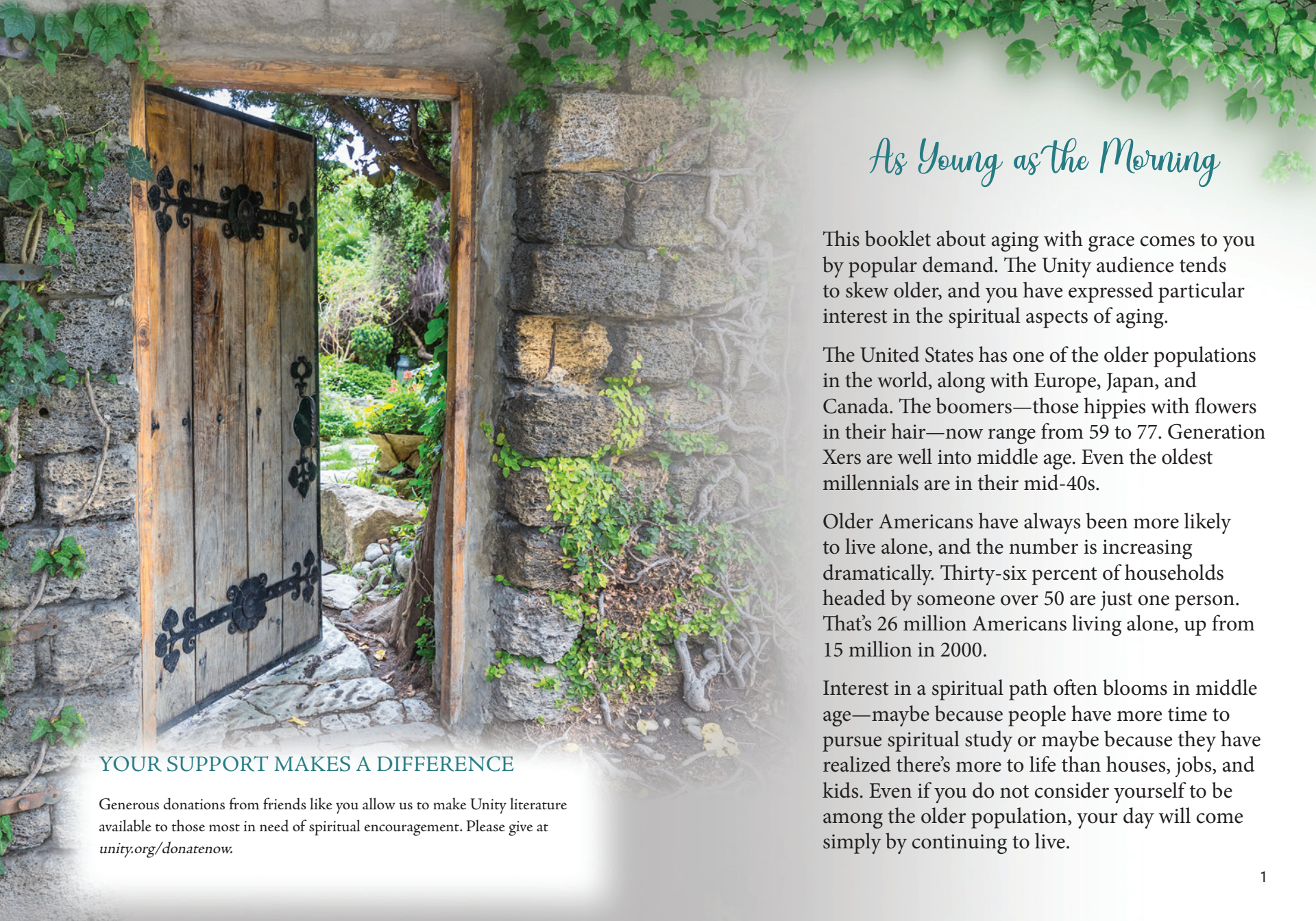




Spiritual Keys  
to  
*Aging Well*





## *As Young as the Morning*

This booklet about aging with grace comes to you by popular demand. The Unity audience tends to skew older, and you have expressed particular interest in the spiritual aspects of aging.

The United States has one of the older populations in the world, along with Europe, Japan, and Canada. The boomers—those hippies with flowers in their hair—now range from 59 to 77. Generation Xers are well into middle age. Even the oldest millennials are in their mid-40s.

Older Americans have always been more likely to live alone, and the number is increasing dramatically. Thirty-six percent of households headed by someone over 50 are just one person. That's 26 million Americans living alone, up from 15 million in 2000.

Interest in a spiritual path often blooms in middle age—maybe because people have more time to pursue spiritual study or maybe because they have realized there's more to life than houses, jobs, and kids. Even if you do not consider yourself to be among the older population, your day will come simply by continuing to live.

### **YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

Generous donations from friends like you allow us to make Unity literature available to those most in need of spiritual encouragement. Please give at [unity.org/donatenow](http://unity.org/donatenow).



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To view the landscape of aging, we have gathered New Thought writers ranging in age from their 50s to 90s to share with you what they have learned so far about growing older. With a lead article by Rev. Robert Brumet about the concept of eldering versus aging, the booklet is then divided into two sections: “Befriending the Body” and “Practicing the Presence.” Our aging bodies can be our teachers, and a variety of spiritual practices can support the shift into later years.

Our aim is to find a balance between acknowledging the passing of years without buying into the idea that aging inevitably brings decline. Unity cofounder Myrtle Fillmore firmly believed age was a state of mind, and legendary author Eric Butterworth said in his 80s that his age was none of his business: “I am as old as God and as young as the morning.”

May the wisdom contained in this booklet serve you wherever you are on your spiritual path and whatever your age!

*Your Friends in Unity*

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## From Aging to Eldering

Rev. Robert Brumet

*Eldering* may seem like a new word, but the practice of eldering goes back several millennia. In tribal cultures and in early societies, the elders were seen as those who carried the traditional wisdom of the community. These elders were turned to for advice and counsel when important decisions needed to be made. The elders presided over traditional ceremonies and rituals. They were the spiritual leaders of the community.

By contrast, our youth-obsessed culture tends to see the aged as irrelevant—perhaps even a burden. Our final years are seen as a time of loss, diminishment, and pain. Many see aging as a curse.

Eldering is a perspective that sees aging and the final years of life as another stage of development in our life experience. As with every developmental stage, there are challenges and opportunities. Each stage of life has its own “curriculum.” The final stage of development is no different.

The paradigm of eldering does not ignore the fact that aging may lead to some physical and mental ailments, as well as to loss and diminishment of certain physical capabilities. Eldering encourages wise and compassionate care for the body. We do not deny or discount this aspect of aging. We encourage acceptance of this element of aging without identifying with it. The experience of aging does not need to define us. We are much more than this physical body, whether it is young or old. When someone recently asked me how old I was, I responded, “I have no idea how old I am, but I know my body is 80 years old.”

Eldering involves looking at our life in four directions: looking back, looking forward, looking outward, and looking inward.



## LOOKING BACK

Looking back includes the process of harvesting our life experiences. *Harvesting* means collecting both the wheat and the tares (see Matthew 13:24-30). Harvesting the wheat represents acknowledging and valuing our achievements and our positive accomplishments in this life. It involves seeing the ways in which the world is a better place because we have lived. Each of us has wheat to harvest, no matter how humble our life may appear. Yet no matter how great or small our accomplishments, the past is the past; we must release our attachment to it. We can live only in the present moment.

Harvesting the tares (weeds) signifies facing our regrets and disappointments; it means forgiving, releasing, and letting go of the past. This is not easy, but it is very important for the well-being of our soul—and for the body as well.

## LOOKING FORWARD

Looking forward means accepting the inevitability of our death. This process involves looking at any fear or foreboding that we may have about death or dying. It involves looking at beliefs (or nonbeliefs) that we have about life after death. This is not a morbid preoccupation with death but simply an acknowledgment of the reality that all physical beings will die.

Another aspect of looking ahead is to address the arrangements needed for those we leave behind. This includes burial or cremation arrangements, drafting a will and durable power of attorney, making all necessary legal and financial arrangements, and providing loved ones with critical information they will need after our passing.

## LOOKING OUTWARD

Looking outward involves finding community and developing a sense of connection to others. Loneliness tends to plague many older people; friends have died and former associations and activities are no longer part of their life. Those who have meaningful social connections tend to live longer than those who do not.

## LOOKING INWARD

Perhaps the most essential aspect of eldering is looking inward. Releasing former identifications allows you to look more deeply into the soul. No longer identified with social and professional roles and no longer identified with the body you had as a younger adult, you can now know yourself more deeply and authentically.

This experience can be challenging, yet it is an opportunity to find your own true nature. As you transition from role to soul, you no longer say, “I am this or I am that.” You can now truly say, “I am that I am.” Welcome home!

*Rev. Robert Brumet served on the faculty of Unity Institute® and Seminary. He founded Mindfulness Ministries and is the author of four books.*

# Befriending The Body

Let go of the mental attitude that causes a sense of burden—that belief in age that weighs one down with “years.” You live in God, not in years ... Instead of thinking, “I’m getting up in years,” get into the youth spirit of joy in living and loving.


—*Myrtle Fillmore’s  
Healing Letters*



# The Joy of a Physical Spiritual Practice

Rev. Philip White





Aging, whether we like it or not, involves physical changes that may take us by surprise. When I was 75, I found myself in the hospital with a blocked artery after years of clueless eating habits and my frequently sedentary lifestyle. The treatment went well, and I was home in a few days, yet I had the strong feeling that I was at a crossroads, that Spirit wanted to show me something new. “There is no such thing as a problem without a gift for you in its hands,” wrote author Richard Bach in his book *Illusions*. Little did I suspect how transformative that gift would be.

I was told I had to spend a month exercising in cardio rehabilitation. My previous daily routine had not included walking on a treadmill or pedaling a stationary bike. I started, came back the second day, and stayed with it that week and the next.

When I first started to exercise, I went at it like a man possessed. One day a fellow exerciser, watching my face as I attacked an exercise like King Sisyphus rolling his immense boulder up a hill, called out, “Hey, Phil, having fun yet?” We laughed, but then it hit me: What if I really approach all this as play? Suddenly with the word *play* came a wave of relaxation. At the next exercise, I laughed as I said under my breath, “This is fun!” and looked around to see if anyone actually heard me. A sense of enjoyment was opening up.

Then the unexpected happened. By the end of the third week, not only was the physical effort becoming easier, but there was slowly forming in me the positive contours of a physical spiritual practice. I was hooked. The

treadmill was becoming a place of energetic meditation. Here was a new, intriguing path before me.

The first thing that came was the rhythm. Like a healthy heartbeat, every rapid step was forming a tempo of healing and life. And with increased physical demand came the practice of surrender—surrender to the body’s own wisdom.

With vigorous walking, my world was slowly drawn down into a sharp focus and an inner stillness, like the runner’s “zone,” and a clear sense of God’s working presence. Here was a renewed awareness that the body is not a fixed thing we carry around with us but a dynamic system of spiritual energy, a continuous creation, and a close, responsive friend. And “the only way to have a friend is to be one,” as Ralph Waldo Emerson once pointed out.

So we struck up a friendship, what Kahlil Gibran called “a sweet responsibility.” And this meant welcoming the body as a devoted ally and for the first time regularly listening to what it was telling me. It meant hearing and responding to its ongoing plea for physical activity and giving the body the opportunity to increase that activity, knowing that it knows its limits.

A dozen years later, this steady and reliable conversation now gives me a realization of progress. It is, in fact, a life of renewable energy that had been waiting and a friendship I had long overlooked and taken for granted. The adventure continues.

*Rev. Philip White is the former editor of Unity Magazine. He also served for many years as director of the Unity continuing education program and dean of its seminary at Unity Village.*



# Healed, Whole, and Healthy

Rev. Vernelle Nelson

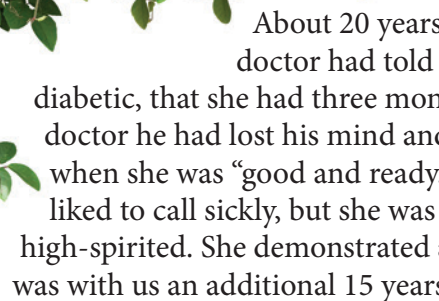
The human body is not designed to last forever. The way we deal with the decline of our body, however, is a matter of choice. I was blessed with four family members who were incredible teachers about illness, death, and dying. They taught me by example how to live fully while aging gracefully in gratitude and peace. As I approach the final quarter of my own life, I often find myself reflecting upon those lessons.

My most powerful lesson came from Bala, the family nickname for Julia Nelson, my paternal grandmother. Bala had major heart challenges for decades. One day during her last hospitalization, I was alone with her in her hospital room, and she said, “You know I’m dying.”

I immediately reverted to the baby she used to cuddle. I literally climbed over the rail of that hospital bed, curled up in her arms, and bawled. Bala hugged me, patted me on the back, and soothingly told me, “I’m at peace with God. I’m at peace with man. I raised all of mine [she had five children]. I already buried one of mine, and I don’t want to be here to bury any of you all [19 grandchildren]. My work is done, and it’s time for me to go home.”

I eventually settled down and crawled out of the bed. I was still crying softly when, with her inimitable wry humor, Bala looked me square in the eye and said “Why are you acting like that? I’m the one dying, not you! You have a long life ahead of you. You’ll be all right.” Right then and there, my attitude about death and dying was forever transformed.

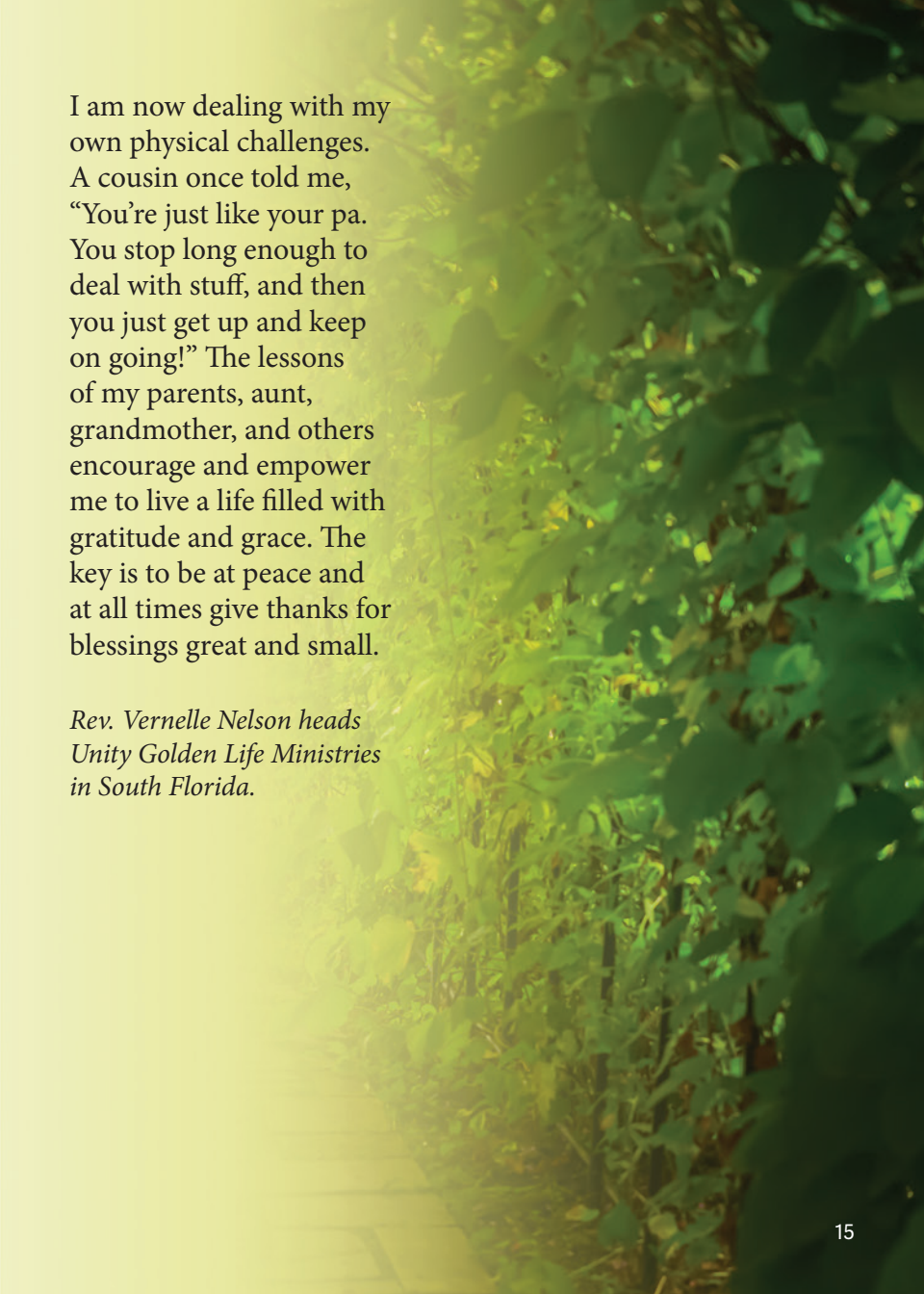




About 20 years before Bala's transition, a doctor had told her sister Thelma, who was diabetic, that she had three months to live. Thelma told the doctor he had lost his mind and let him know she would die when she was "good and ready." Thelma was what people liked to call sickly, but she was full of life, fun-loving, and high-spirited. She demonstrated a strong faith in God, and she was with us an additional 15 years!

I witnessed my mother, Alice Nelson, deal with cancer for eight years while caring for her own mother, who was in her 90s, and managing a half dozen rental properties while rarely missing a beat. Until the last few months of her life, she traveled and maintained a relatively busy social life. She went to the beauty salon on a regular basis, always dressed impeccably, and was actively involved with the people in her neighborhood. Ma's resolve to get the most out of life made it possible for her to forge on when others might have thrown in the towel.

John Leon Nelson, my dad, had a cancer challenge barely 18 months after my mom's transition. A few years after going into remission, we learned he had a debilitating heart condition. His cardiologist informed us that no one lived with that condition for more than two years. All internet research confirmed that prognosis. Always a dapper dresser, Daddy valiantly maintained an active social life but slowly wound down, gradually stepping back from his social engagements, never giving up on the beauty of life. He went to church every Sunday that he was up to it and had an obvious, deep awareness of the power and presence of God. His faith, positive outlook, and attitude of gratitude empowered him to live four more years.



I am now dealing with my own physical challenges. A cousin once told me, "You're just like your pa. You stop long enough to deal with stuff, and then you just get up and keep on going!" The lessons of my parents, aunt, grandmother, and others encourage and empower me to live a life filled with gratitude and grace. The key is to be at peace and at all times give thanks for blessings great and small.

*Rev. Vernelle Nelson heads  
Unity Golden Life Ministries  
in South Florida.*



A lush garden scene with various plants and a brick wall in the background. The garden is filled with green foliage, including a large bush of silver-leafed plants in the foreground. A brick wall is visible in the background, partially covered by climbing plants. The overall atmosphere is bright and natural.

# Eating and Aging

Rev. David B. Adams

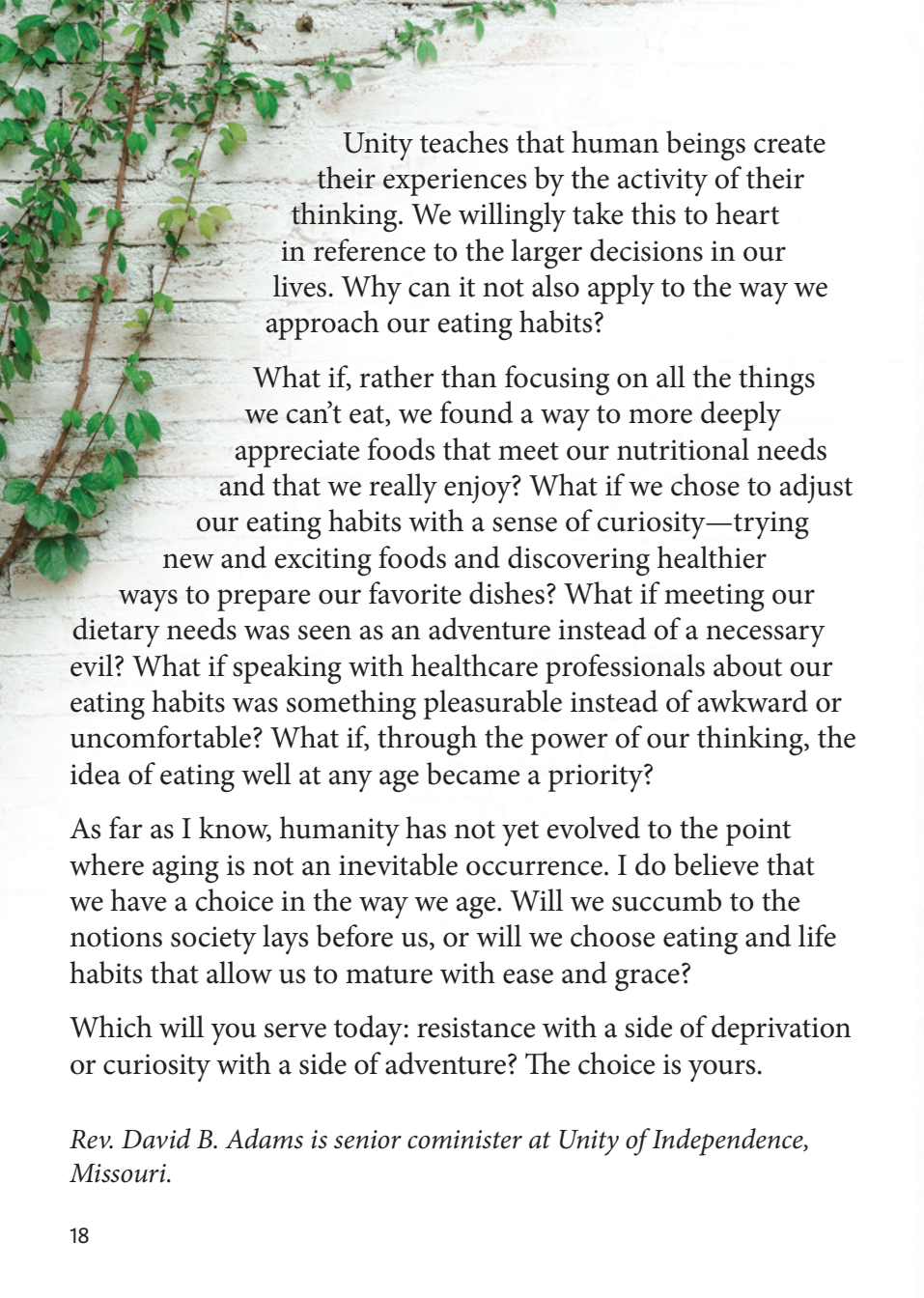
Society works to convince us that as we age our bodies change for the worse. Television ads, social and print media, and even our own healthcare system seem to regard conditions related to aging as inevitable and something to resist or fear.

And yet, we know countless stories, including those of Unity founders Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, of people advancing into their later years with grace. Stories of their experience tell us that part of what filled their chronological progression with ease and joy involved greater interest in their eating habits.

The Fillmores began to mindfully select what they consumed based on what would provide the best nourishment for their bodies. Recognizing their bodies as temples of God also invited knowing what no longer served their highest nutritional good and removing it from their intake. In the same way, they honored their temples by introducing foods that provided for their nutritional needs and that they enjoyed. Although the Fillmores were vegetarian, I am not recommending any particular choice for such success. I suggest we acknowledge the *power of choice* they exercised with amazing results.

As we mature, our bodies process elements essential to our health and well-being differently. As we move through this progression, it can become easy to believe these adjustments are forms of deprivation. Dwelling on thoughts like “I remember when I could enjoy spicy food without getting heartburn” or “Gosh, I sure do miss cheese” leads us into a mindset of lack. We begin to agree with society that growing older means giving up things we enjoy.





Unity teaches that human beings create their experiences by the activity of their thinking. We willingly take this to heart in reference to the larger decisions in our lives. Why can it not also apply to the way we approach our eating habits?

What if, rather than focusing on all the things we can't eat, we found a way to more deeply appreciate foods that meet our nutritional needs and that we really enjoy? What if we chose to adjust our eating habits with a sense of curiosity—trying new and exciting foods and discovering healthier ways to prepare our favorite dishes? What if meeting our dietary needs was seen as an adventure instead of a necessary evil? What if speaking with healthcare professionals about our eating habits was something pleasurable instead of awkward or uncomfortable? What if, through the power of our thinking, the idea of eating well at any age became a priority?

As far as I know, humanity has not yet evolved to the point where aging is not an inevitable occurrence. I do believe that we have a choice in the way we age. Will we succumb to the notions society lays before us, or will we choose eating and life habits that allow us to mature with ease and grace?

Which will you serve today: resistance with a side of deprivation or curiosity with a side of adventure? The choice is yours.


*Rev. David B. Adams is senior cominister at Unity of Independence, Missouri.*



# The Change of Life

Rev. Christina Garza





Menopause. The word many young girls are taught to fear and dread. Tales from female elders of hot flashes, fatigue, weight gain, and emotional fluctuations, as well as other assorted symptoms that affect a woman's physical, emotional, and sexual self.

I turned 50 years old, and like clockwork, "it" happened. When it first began, some of the typical symptoms set in, but I was in total denial. I thought maybe it was an off month or maybe I was going through stress. But deep down I knew: It was the dreaded "change of life."

As women, we often have been conditioned to fear, deny, resist, and resent menopause. It has become the symbol that a woman's life is over. Our culture subtly conveys that we are no longer young and beautiful, and our value is diminished.

"Menopause in the 19th century was written about only in terms of what women lose at this stage of life," says Marilyn Yalom, Ph.D., senior scholar at the Stanford University Clayman Institute for Gender Research. Her chapter in the documentary text

*Victorian Women* quotes 19th-century obstetricians who taught that "the change of life unhinges the female nervous system and deprives women of their personal charms." In many ways, these toxic cultural myths have not evolved.

I must admit, I had more emotional than physical side effects. I had always wanted to birth a child but opted instead to focus on raising my adopted daughter and pursue other life priorities. Though I knew I realistically wouldn't have a biological child, menopause made it final.

After a brief mourning period, I decided I needed to approach this change with a Unity mindset and Unity approach. I knew that what you resist then persists. Shannon Perry, director of programming at Gennev, a telehealth menopause clinic, says "It's the resistance that yields more stress and takes more of our energy and can actually throw our equilibrium systems out of whack." I became determined to use my spiritual tools to engage this physical and energetic moment.

The spiritual principles taught in Unity allowed me to question the deficiency model and the medicalization of our normal bodily transitions. I began to see myself as healthy, whole, and complete. I knew I needed to make peace with my body and allow menopause to be a magical adventure and not a dreaded change.

I began to call my hot flashes "power surges" and visualized the wisdom of my ancestors and women before me blessing my body. I began to approach this time with curiosity and humor as I watched funny "thermostat war" videos on TikTok and exchanged menopause memes with friends who were in transition as well. I paired my newfound



empowered perspective with support from my acupuncturist/herbalist and YouTube videos of qigong and yin yoga.

Before I knew it, menopause was over. The change had happened overall with little fanfare and few issues, and the symptoms lasted only six or eight months. It sounds silly, but my change in perspective allowed me to have a brief and, dare I say, fun process.

I offer my story to give others permission to approach menopause and other natural aging opportunities with compassion, grace, patience, and faith. We must trust ourselves and our bodies to express, evolve, and elevate. We have the privilege and blessing to embrace this time of renewal and transformation and prove spiritual principle. I now embrace my new “crone” status as the wise, fierce, queen goddess.

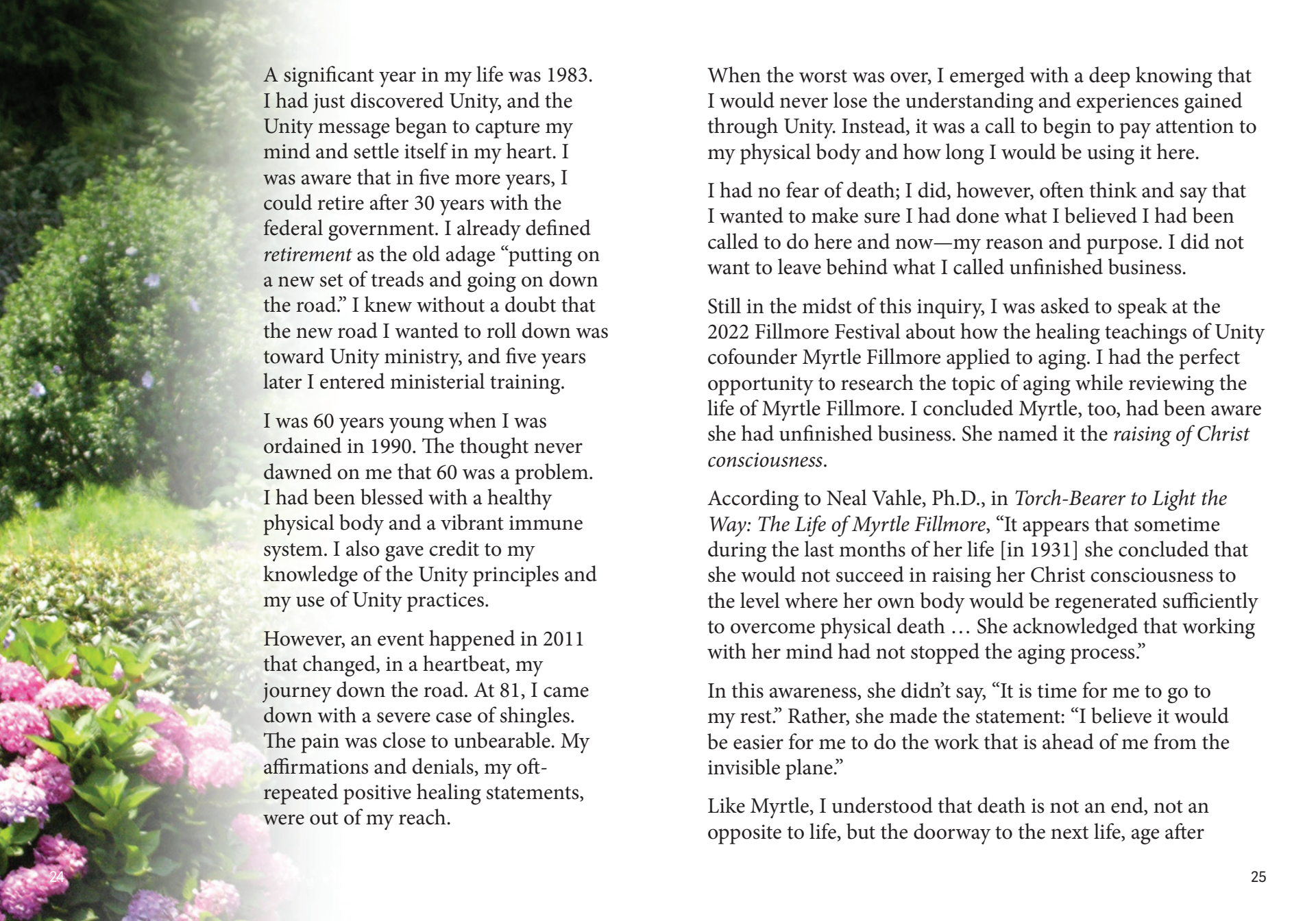
*Rev. Christina Garza is senior minister at Unity of Nashville, Tennessee.*

## A New Set of Treads

Rev. E.J. Niles







A significant year in my life was 1983. I had just discovered Unity, and the Unity message began to capture my mind and settle itself in my heart. I was aware that in five more years, I could retire after 30 years with the federal government. I already defined *retirement* as the old adage “putting on a new set of treads and going on down the road.” I knew without a doubt that the new road I wanted to roll down was toward Unity ministry, and five years later I entered ministerial training.

I was 60 years young when I was ordained in 1990. The thought never dawned on me that 60 was a problem. I had been blessed with a healthy physical body and a vibrant immune system. I also gave credit to my knowledge of the Unity principles and my use of Unity practices.

However, an event happened in 2011 that changed, in a heartbeat, my journey down the road. At 81, I came down with a severe case of shingles. The pain was close to unbearable. My affirmations and denials, my oft-repeated positive healing statements, were out of my reach.

When the worst was over, I emerged with a deep knowing that I would never lose the understanding and experiences gained through Unity. Instead, it was a call to begin to pay attention to my physical body and how long I would be using it here.

I had no fear of death; I did, however, often think and say that I wanted to make sure I had done what I believed I had been called to do here and now—my reason and purpose. I did not want to leave behind what I called unfinished business.

Still in the midst of this inquiry, I was asked to speak at the 2022 Fillmore Festival about how the healing teachings of Unity cofounder Myrtle Fillmore applied to aging. I had the perfect opportunity to research the topic of aging while reviewing the life of Myrtle Fillmore. I concluded Myrtle, too, had been aware she had unfinished business. She named it the *raising of Christ consciousness*.

According to Neal Vahle, Ph.D., in *Torch-Bearer to Light the Way: The Life of Myrtle Fillmore*, “It appears that sometime during the last months of her life [in 1931] she concluded that she would not succeed in raising her Christ consciousness to the level where her own body would be regenerated sufficiently to overcome physical death ... She acknowledged that working with her mind had not stopped the aging process.”

In this awareness, she didn’t say, “It is time for me to go to my rest.” Rather, she made the statement: “I believe it would be easier for me to do the work that is ahead of me from the invisible plane.”

Like Myrtle, I understood that death is not an end, not an opposite to life, but the doorway to the next life, age after



age. Death is a door that opens at each juncture of our individual and collective journeys—journeys that are eternal, never-ending.

The NRSV translation of Ecclesiastes 3:11 reads: “He has put a sense of past and future into their minds.” Several years ago I came across a translation I resonate with better: “He has put eternity into the mind of man.” It was from a translation I have not been able to find again.

So with eternity in mind, at 92½ I am ready to put on my next new set of treads and keep rolling.

*Rev. E.J. Niles has served as minister to churches in Oregon and Virginia and is the founder of Spiral Pathways, an organization studying the evolution of human consciousness as reflected in the Bible.*



## Practicing The Presence

Spirit has no age; it is eternal, as God is eternal and unchanging. The soul is not old in the sense of its being full of years and decrepitude. The soul is ever unfolding God’s ideas, and these are unchangeable. The development of soul qualities causes the individual to be more mature in his judgment and his expression, and as the soul is ever keeping in touch with that which is true of God and the Son of God, it is refreshed and eager for life’s experiences.

—Myrtle Fillmore’s *Healing Letters*



# Change Is Our Friend


Rev. Jim Blake

As children, most of us anticipate birthdays with excitement about growing older. We know we get to do more and be more with each passing year. But somewhere in early adulthood, many of us begin to dread birthdays. Birthdays mean change—to our bodies and also to our circumstances. Loved ones move away. Neighborhoods change; favorite restaurants and stores may close. Society and technology change and challenge us. Throughout time, we lose cherished friends and family as they pass from this plane of existence. As I look at these endless changes, I can see why we resist getting older.

I viewed aging through this lens of dread for many years until I had a spiritual awakening. First, I began to understand we are not our bodies; we are the everlasting, impermanent consciousness beyond our thoughts and the vessel that houses them. In truth, we are a unique expression of the Divine, incarnated here to live and experience the spectrum of life so the divine presence may experience more of itself.

I began to understand that death is not a bad thing, just as birth is not a bad thing. It is a transformation. We transform from this expression into the next expression of living.





These two learnings began to soften my perception of the aging process. I was able to let go of my fear of not enough time, fear of change in my life, and fear of the losses I might experience. I studied the concept of change and learned that change truly is the only constant in the universe. Just look at nature and the cycle of seasons!

Eastern traditions teach that the reason we suffer mentally and emotionally with change is because of our resistance to it. If we can learn to accept the universal fact that change is going to occur, we are much less likely to resist it. Instead, we can expect it and, rather than suffer, be at peace with it. We can make change our friend.

Throughout the years, the more I have embraced the mantra *change is my friend*, the more easily I have been able to accept changes both expected and unexpected. I may feel an initial emotional reaction, but almost immediately, I am prompted from deep within to turn to appreciation. My mind and heart almost instantly begin to focus on gratitude for what was.

This is a powerful transformation and one we can all experience as we move from resistance to acceptance.

With this new lens, I have much greater appreciation for each year of my life and the physical changes that come with it. I still don't enjoy the doctor visits and age-related health screenings or having to give up physical activities like basketball, but I can accept them peacefully.

The most important by-product of this journey from resistance to appreciation—and the single most valuable gift of getting older—has been recognizing the wisdom gained through my lived experiences. The internalized wisdom of a lifetime helps us make better decisions, tempers our reactions to people we previously couldn't tolerate, and allows us to coach and guide our younger friends and family as they come of age.

This reservoir of individual knowledge is the precious jewel of getting older and one that I have come to appreciate and cultivate with each passing year. Although I know I will continue to have opportunities to practice willingness to accept change, my spirit is bolstered by the wisdom that can be gained through each new experience—wisdom I can pass on when the time is right.

We journey from student to sage as we age. May you be at peace with the changes that come before you, and may your gifts of wisdom and guidance bless those with whom they are shared.

*Rev. Jim Blake is the CEO of Unity World Headquarters.*

# Express Your Feelings

Rev. Carolyn Warnemuende

When observing the seasons in nature, we recognize a cycle: birth and newness in spring, ripening and maturing during summer, and the burst of color, then fading of fall before winter, when dormancy and death come. This cycle of life is endless—birth, maturity, decline, and death. We experience this same cycle in our lives.


As we age, our bodies begin to change. These changes feel unfamiliar and sometimes cause angst. We may fight them, wishing we were once again young. By willingly accepting the inevitable changes with grace and a positive attitude, we remain young in spirit. We become a shining light for others.

Just as our bodies change as we move into our later years, so do our emotions. The research on older people indicates that seniors exhibit a comparable or higher level of emotional empathy than young adults—the ability to feel what others feel or to feel compassion for them.

Emotional empathy reminds us that feelings are universal. Through our feelings, we relate to others. When we consciously recognize feelings and practice experiencing their subtle nuances, they bring us closer to all humankind. We see that we are not alone.

Author Cynthia Hand in her novel *Hallowed* says, “There’s nothing more inspiring than the complexity and beauty of the human heart.” Have you ever considered that the multiplicity of feelings we experience in our heart is what brings richness and color to our life? When we live in the vivid color of joy, the soft color of peace, and even shades of gray, we bring depth to life.





As we age, many feel an urgency to become their most authentic self. If not now, when? I often hear from older adults, “I finally feel free to be myself. I no longer care what others think.” Being ourselves means expressing who we are, including our feelings, as authentically as possible and with more depth than we have ever had.

We sometimes lose sight of this in our efforts to be positive. I have a friend who, when I ask, “How are you?” always responds, “I’m spectacular. I’m Unity!” While this may be true, it doesn’t give me the opportunity to know her more deeply. It doesn’t open the door for exploration that leads to understanding.

Bernie Siegel, M.D., tells us, “We destroy ourselves when we stop feeling. If you bury your feelings within you, you become a graveyard.” This reminds me of the fifth principle taught in Unity: We must put our knowledge into action. If we do not act on what we know or how we feel, we become mere shadows of the beautiful creations we are meant to be. When we share

our feelings, we connect with the humanness in each other, which then leads to deeper spiritual understanding, love, and compassion.

To become more aware of our feelings and more open to sharing them, we can take several steps.

**Pay attention:** When you get a nudge of feeling, take time to look at it and give it a name. Naming it helps ground it in the body.

**Journal:** Without monitoring or judging, and as clearly as possible, write by hand what you feel. The process of writing helps clarify deep feelings.

**Practice sharing:** We are all in this human experience together. There are many who are experiencing the same feelings that you are. Choose a safe person and begin sharing as authentically as you can. This becomes healing for both of you.

**Accept:** “Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror. Just keep going. No feeling is final.”—Rainer Maria Rilke

**Remember:** Feelings are something we have, not something we are.

There is nothing more liberating than being all we were created to be. Be brave, be bold. Express yourself! You are a light of the world.

*Rev. Carolyn Warnemuende is a Unity minister living in Sacramento, California.*





# Living Alone but Not Lonely

Marilyn King-Compton

Writing about aging while living alone could not be more perfect for someone like me, who at the age of 64, some 30-odd years ago, was faced with the sudden, unexpected, and painful transition of a dearly loved and devoted spouse. Despite the heartbreaking reality that I would be living on my own, I was able to place my shoulders back and make an adjustment.

I attribute that positive mental attitude to my ongoing embrace of New Thought Christianity and its principles. Some years prior I had been introduced to the spiritual teachings espoused by Rev. Dr. Johnnie Colemon, who founded the Universal Foundation for Better Living. She herself was a product of Unity and an inspiration to untold numbers of seeking souls who found guidance and solace through her ministry.

The most revealing message that captured my attention and anchored my spiritual foundation was becoming aware that the spirit of God was not far away somewhere but actually within my very own being—and in other fellow earthlings. We were all one. To learn that the light of the Christ—the same spirit that lived in Jesus our Way Shower—was also living in me as intelligence and power enhanced my internalization of oneness.

Basic Truth principles and H. Emilie Cady's book *Lessons in Truth* were particularly impressive, as were Charles Fillmore's eye-opening books. The knowledge imparted concerning Jesus' 12 disciples representing 12 dynamic mind powers that make up our spiritual nature was fascinating. So beneficial were they toward the development of a higher level of spiritual awareness that an indwelling, deepening relationship not only with God but with those dynamic dozen took place in me.



Years progressed, time moving along with various challenges, changes, setbacks, struggles, and sorrows presenting themselves. Working years were productive and rewarding, and travels were exciting. However, eventual retirement ensued along with an unfortunate and irreversible surgical procedure that brought unwelcome and life-changing handicaps into my life, world, and affairs. This critical error not only created painful and depressing conditions but many phases of rehabilitative isolation and limits on normal activities. This could have dashed the light in me, but having those spiritual remedies made all the difference and situations bearable.

Those were some of the lowest times of my life, and I needed companionship, confidants, and comforters. All of the dynamic dozen were there, and all of them responded and attended to my needs—Peter as faith, Andrew as strength, John as love, Philip as power, Thomas as understanding, Bartholomew as imagination, to name a few. To say a feeling of loneliness never knocked on the door of my consciousness would be untrue, but entry was never allowed.

Then came the Covid-19 pandemic, affecting the minds and movement of the world. Some of the aging population found themselves affected by social isolation, obscurity, and, yes, loneliness. For me, I chose to find new meaning and purpose by increasing my knowledge of modern technology—email, text, FaceTime, Zoom. It enhanced my ability to stay in touch and in tune with the outside world.

This unprecedented period also provided more dedication to my genealogical quest, which had already become quite rewarding. Devotion to my inspirational writings and one-on-

one conversations increased and took on even greater meaning. Individuals needed to be inspired and uplifted, including me.

Early on at the beginning of my spiritual journey, I remember so clearly how after testing the validity of my newly acquired spiritual acuity and following each successful demonstration, my face would light up into a broad smile. I concluded that, indeed, the Truth principles really did work. They still do. Now at the age of 94, like the old spiritual “Through It All,” I have sidestepped the emotional grasp of loneliness.

Yes, aging is definitely a fact of life regardless of some of our prescribed teachings. Yes, hair does turn gray, bones may ache, and challenging phases may seem overwhelming. However, we seasoned souls must face reality while maintaining those spiritual remedies that will carry us through. I may still be living alone, but I am still not lonely and am still finding many reasons to smile!

*Marilyn King-Compton is a long-standing member of Christ Universal Temple in Chicago, Illinois, and for nearly 40 years has been a contributing writer to Daily Inspiration for Better Living.*





# The Grateful Heart

Rev. Luzette Rivera-Diez

Have you ever wondered whether people are grateful because they are happy or they are happy because they are grateful? I daresay the latter is true. It is not happiness that makes us grateful. It's gratefulness that makes us happy.

As I contemplate my life today, I look back at everything I lived through in the pursuit of happiness, and happiness was always closer than I ever knew. It took half my life to realize it, probably because I grow through experiences, not instant revelation.

Many moons ago, at 40, as a Latina single parent and professional, I moved with my daughter to Florida from Puerto Rico. Although I had a stable job with ExxonMobil, I was always worried—concerned about my teenage daughter, money, work, career, and relationships. Even though all seemed well on the outside, I was not happy.

At the same time, I was beginning my studies in Unity. I was taking a class based on a book by Rev. Catherine Ponder in which she invited us to notice our first thoughts in the morning as we were becoming conscious. I thought I was very much aware of my thoughts, but, boy, was I in for a surprise.

Once I noticed my incessant worry, I began to consciously allow my first awareness in the morning to be of gratitude—even if only for being alive and able to breathe. As I focused on gratitude, my heart was able to relax and trust a little more because I was finding a long list of things to be grateful for.

This is a fundamental metaphysical teaching: Whatever thoughts you are holding in your mind, conscious or not, you will express and experience in the outer world. Our thoughts are causative. We are responsible for the world we see and experience.



Gratitude is a causative energy, not a reactionary emotion. Gratitude can be experienced in the best or worst of times. It can be experienced whether one is living in abundance or scarcity. It's not what we have accumulated or achieved in life that matters. It's about the fullness of our hearts.

A grateful heart is a heart full of greatness. What fills your heart? Living in an attitude of gratitude reminds you of all you have and already are. Gratitude is a reminder of the Presence in action in your life. A grateful heart opens to the flow and draws to itself great things.

Count your blessings and be grateful for what you have, because as little or inadequate as you may think it is, it is evidence of the *all*. This will open your heart to see *all* there really *is*. And this, my friends, is pure bliss.

It may not be easy in the beginning, but stay with it. Remember Paul's instruction: "Give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). *In* all circumstance, not *for* all circumstance. Become aware that every moment is a gift. Find the gift and the blessing. It's there. Then let your joy fill the moment with happiness!

*Rev. Luzette Rivera-Diez is a semiretired minister who is actively involved in training and credentialing for Unity ministers in Spanish.*

## Creative Pursuits

Rev. Beatriz Gallerano Bell



When I was about 35 years old, a woman around my age told me she had started painting as a way of preparing for her old age. She said when she no longer worked, she wanted to have something to dedicate herself to. She wanted to be able to do something she liked, so she had started practicing this art.

At the time, old age seemed very distant to me, but her reasoning struck me nonetheless. Now I understand that it must have been recorded somewhere in my mind. The years went by and from time to time the thought of preparing to grow old came to me.

The day came when I was older and, surely moved by some internal impulse, I began to take classes in mosaics, an ancient technique of cutting tiles and forming a design with them. As I learned and practiced this creative activity, it became more and more exciting for me.

Having only basic knowledge of the technique of working and molding small pieces of tiles, I ventured to make different creations such as trays, tea boxes, small paintings, and fountain holders. Although they were very simple jobs, for me—who had no experience in any art-related practice—it meant entering a completely new and fascinating world.

One thing that amazed me was that in the group attending these classes, though all worked with the same materials, each creation was unique and different.

I was also discovering that artistic or creative activity of any kind has the quality of keeping us focused on the here and now. When we are focused on carrying out a project, however simple and small it may be, our attention is in the present moment. There is no sadness for what is left behind or anxiety for what is to come. Our soul is in unity with what we are creating.

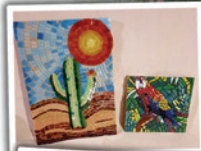
Art in its various expressions gives us the possibility of creating beauty. It helps us to bring forth and express talents that perhaps we were unaware of possessing. Creativity keeps us active, since creative ideas are expressed through action. In the process of creating, we are never alone—the omnipresent Spirit is there as our guide and inspiration.

If God is creativity itself expressed in everything created, then we as God's children are naturally creative by divine inheritance. The potential to create is latent in every human being, and if we have not explored it up to now, a later stage in our lives is an excellent time to do so.

We can make all creative activity a spiritual practice. The fifth basic principle taught in Unity tells us about the importance of putting into practice the spiritual Truth we know. Expressing our creativity is one way to do that, and in this way, we bless ourselves and others because we express and share our gifts. And for this, there is no age.

A creative manifestation does not need to pretend to become a work of art; it only needs to be an expression of love. Creating beauty and, through it, lavishing love around us will fill us with joy and fulfillment. We will realize that even as the body ages, the soul grows.

*Rev. Beatriz Gallerano Bell and her husband Frank have a ministry in Córdoba, Argentina, called Unity Sembrando Luz (Unity Sowing Light) and oversee distribution there for the Spanish-language Daily Word, La Palabra Diaria.*







# Find and Build Community

Rev. Edith Washington-Woods

I have lived in several states throughout the continental United States. The first time I left my Midwest hometown, I moved to Los Angeles. The *big city*. At age 18, I found it easy to meet and make new friends. I met them at the community college I attended, nightclubs, parties, or the record store. (Yes, in 1978 we had stores that sold vinyl records.)

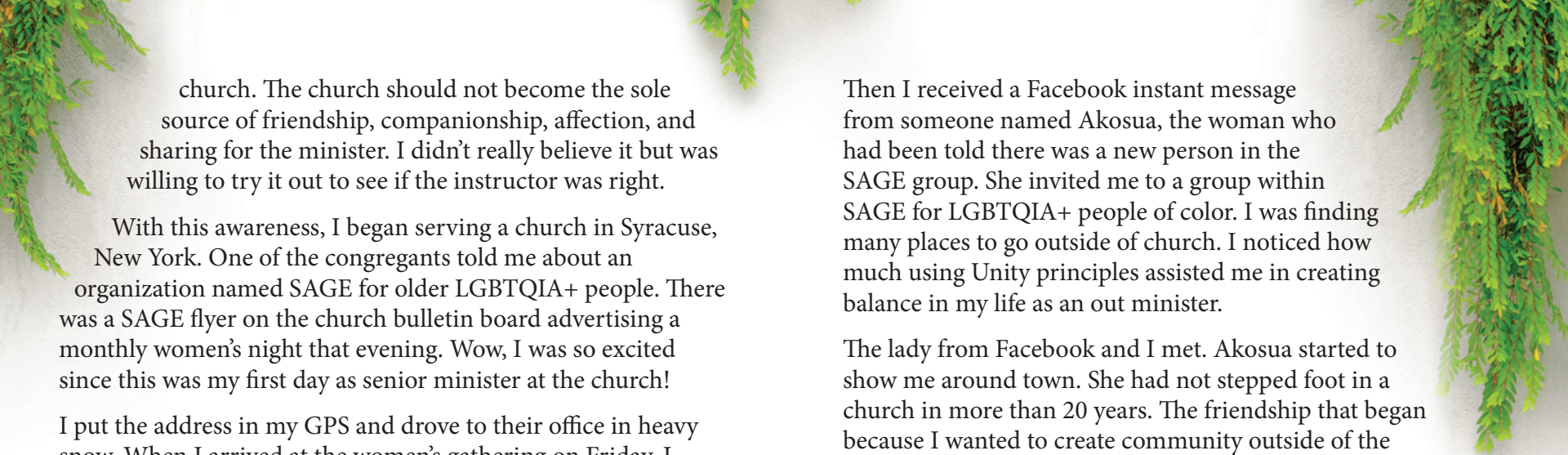
As I got older and continued to move across the country, I discovered it was not as easy to make new friends. How was I possibly going to make friends when I no longer participated in most of the activities I did when I was younger? I started to believe it was not possible for me to have close friends or a long-term romantic relationship.

I entered recovery in 1994 as a 34-year-old single parent. People in 12-step recovery groups became my friends, especially those with children and the bikers—those who rode Harleys.

Soon after I got sober, I found Unity through an AA sponsor. I saw the connection between the 12 steps and Unity principles. My favorite is the third principle: “We create our life experiences through our way of thinking.” In AA we often say, “I came for the drinking; I stayed for my thinking.” My thinking had convinced me I could no longer find friends as I did when I was a young adult. But that was only true in my own mind!

Later, while attending Unity seminary, one of my instructors informed our class that when we become ordained ministers serving a church, we should create community outside of the





church. The church should not become the sole source of friendship, companionship, affection, and sharing for the minister. I didn't really believe it but was willing to try it out to see if the instructor was right.

With this awareness, I began serving a church in Syracuse, New York. One of the congregants told me about an organization named SAGE for older LGBTQIA+ people. There was a SAGE flyer on the church bulletin board advertising a monthly women's night that evening. Wow, I was so excited since this was my first day as senior minister at the church!

I put the address in my GPS and drove to their office in heavy snow. When I arrived at the women's gathering on Friday, I was not able to get in because I didn't know the door code. A woman who knew the code walked up, and, little did I know, she later told another woman that I was new in town.

As a Black female minister who happened to be single, I was determined to create community for myself outside of the church as a way to create healthy boundaries. At this gathering, I found women who were playing cards, watching television, or talking with each other while snacking on sugary and salty treats. They welcomed me to this community when I introduced myself. They even invited me to a dinner gathering the following Monday, which was my birthday.

Then I received a Facebook instant message from someone named Akosua, the woman who had been told there was a new person in the SAGE group. She invited me to a group within SAGE for LGBTQIA+ people of color. I was finding many places to go outside of church. I noticed how much using Unity principles assisted me in creating balance in my life as an out minister.

The lady from Facebook and I met. Akosua started to show me around town. She had not stepped foot in a church in more than 20 years. The friendship that began because I wanted to create community outside of the church I serve continued until we started dating. Today we have known each other for 10 years and have been married for seven.

*Rev. Edith Washington-Woods is senior minister at Unity of Gaithersburg, Maryland.*



# The Joy of Service

Rev. Sandra Campbell

How many times has someone told you that you're too old to do something? There is so much focus on staying young that many people fear growing old. The truth is that aging is inevitable, but growing old is an attitude of mind.

From elders who have influenced my life, I can say that we remain youthful when we are of service in whatever way we can be. My mother, Mary Lee Wayne, was the poster child for aging with grace. I personally witnessed her good deeds for others without strings attached. She said it gave her joy to be of service to anyone in need.

Among many things she taught me was the idea that age is nothing but a number and not to allow the years on the calendar to stop us from doing what we can for others. In her 90s, she would sometimes forget her own advice and succumb to the idea that she was limited because of her age. I would quickly remind her of the words of wisdom she instilled in me.

When she was no longer able to get around as much, she would spend her days on the telephone with family and friends to let them know she was thinking about them. When her hands were no longer steady, she would insist that I address the many cards she would send out for all occasions. She infected everyone she encountered with her enthusiasm and joy for life.

When some remarked that she didn't look or seem like her age—even at 100—I knew it was because of her attitude. Her service was kindness, and she was a master at it. She gracefully left this world the same way she had lived in it for 101 years—with grace, gratitude, and joy.



In her 80s, Rev. Ruth M. Mosley, D.D., founder of Unity Urban Ministerial School, was flat on her back in a care facility. Unable to get in and out of bed on her own, Rev. Ruth did not allow her years or lack of mobility to keep her from serving others. From her bed, she shared Truth principles and Unity teachings with fellow residents in the facility.

My brother-in-law, Don Watson, was another living testimony to the power of attitude in aging gracefully through service. In his early 80s, he got daily joy from picking up and dropping off dozens of people for medical appointments. He did this all the while undergoing dialysis and treatment for cancer. He said the smiles and joy on the patients' faces restored his strength.

The thing these three had in common was their joyful attitude in serving others. Age was not a factor. Now that I've entered my eighth decade, I am more inspired than ever to use my gifts and talents to serve others. That is what gives me the greatest joy and satisfaction.

When we figure out what makes us feel joy and we have the courage to do it at any age, we find our purpose for being. That purpose does not end as we grow older. In fact, the aging process can be a huge benefit for us and those whose lives touch ours.

With age comes wisdom. Our circumstances may be beyond our control. Even if we are fearful of aging, bedridden, or living with a terminal illness, we are never too old to create our experience by what we choose to think, what we believe, and what we feel. That is one of the fundamental principles taught in Unity, and it works.

Age is nothing but a number. It's all about attitude and service. When we figure out what gives us the greatest joy, what makes us look forward to getting up every day, we won't need lotions, potions, or notions to keep us youthful. All we need is to find ways to serve.

*Rev. Sandra Campbell is associate minister at Unity Temple on the Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri, and executive director of the Unity Urban Ministerial School.*





# *Alive, Alert, Awake, Enthusiastic*

Rev. Elizabeth Longo

As I grow older, I am more mindful of the richness of my inner life and the importance of focusing my life's energies on what really matters. I spend time nourishing my spirit in prayer, meditating, journaling, and basking in the Silence. I pay attention to my inner guidance and make a point of continually renewing my soul. I do not succumb to the temptation to lie on the couch and spend hours watching TV. I know it is not good for my mental or physical health. Instead, when I plan my day, I make sure to include some physical activity.


I drink from the ever-flowing fountain of life within and live my life with zeal, wonder, and awe. When feeling down or weary, I pause and pay attention to what my body is needing. I make sure I get adequate sleep, exercise, and eat well.

I love going for a mindful walk by a lake. I walk with intention, expressing gratitude for every experience that has brought me to the present moment. I count my blessings as I focus on the richness of life. This truly uplifts my soul and deepens my awareness of my oneness with God and all of creation.

I take time to retreat with the intention to “re-youth” and renew my mind, body, and soul. In my quiet time, I ask for guidance. I take an inventory of my life. I ask to be shown what is no longer serving me. With an open mind, I observe and then make it a point to release unforgiving thoughts and beliefs that are blocking my good and my aliveness. I focus on what brings me joy.

In my inner sanctuary, I ignite the power of my imagination while asking to be shown, “Who would I be if I was living the life of my dreams?” I rejoice in the feeling tone and set the intention to embody the newfound energy. I set the intention to make micro changes in my daily habits that include activities





that make my heart sing. I watch my thoughts and go about my day with curiosity and an eager mind, allowing my consciousness the freedom to expand.

I challenge myself to learn something new daily to keep my brain active. I love to travel and discover new horizons and learn about different cultures. Changing perspectives expands my awareness and ignites my creative juices. I approach life with zeal and excitement.

Recently I spent a month in Venice, Florida, a magical, artsy town with mermaids in every corner, great dining, and beautiful beaches. Every morning I went to yoga on the beach. People of all ages gathered. My soul was lifted seeing so many people in their 80s and even 90s focused on stretching, balance, and the breath of life. Something in me clicked and became aware that age is just a number.

With a youthful spirit, filled with vitality, I go forth to live my life to the fullest. I am grateful for the wisdom life has brought me, and now I take care of myself with immense loving-kindness. I choose to live life with zeal and enthusiasm as I keep my vitality at its peak by being mindful to make the best choices for my well-being.

*Rev. Elizabeth Longo is a coach and ministry consultant in South Florida.*

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