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SHIFTING GEARS

Soon we move into autumn and it is time once again to 'shift gears.' Change will be upon us in the form of another season with its myriad opportunities to release and let go.

In writing this short article for the newsletter, I get to dissect my process with a fine tooth comb, seeing the many ways that I fear change and resist the flow. Although I have been on a growth path all my life, there are parts of me that are terrified of change; I want to dig in my heels and put on the brakes. The 'lowly caterpillar' is a great inspiration to me. He metamorphosizes into the butterfly with such grace and ease, never resisting the flow, trying to control the process, or asking what, when, why or how! All of nature, with the exception of most of us human beings in the western world, seems to be at ease with this process.

Now, at 'this time of the great turning', we get to see that our collective resistance to change on a global scale has reached epic proportions. We can choose either to become extinct like the dinosaur or learn from the hardier species that have survived. If humanity can harness a collective willingness to change as well as an ability to release and let go, handing it over to Spirit and willing to be guided, perhaps it is not too late.....what do you think?

This month, as in other months, we look at the weekly themes that the Spiritual Directions Committee has chosen and in so doing, hopefully we will gain further clarity as to how to deepen our own personal process.

The first Sunday in September, the topic is "Resistance or Flow". No doubt Rev. Joan Hopper will share valuable insights with us that we can use to enrich our own lives. Next we get to hear about "Chaos or Change". Is it possible to undergo deep and lasting change without initially experiencing chaos? These are questions some of us will be asking ourselves as we go into week two. On September 18th, a panel of three will be sharing with us about Conscious Relationship.

The Lighthouse September 2011

A Newsletter for Friends of the Church The Church of Truth - Community of Conscious Living

We are a spiritual community supporting each other in exploring our personal journeys regardless of spiritual path or belief.

Our community is comprised of a rich field of individual and collective energies that is ever changing and evolving.

While we are accepting of diverse expressions of belief, we recognize the interconnectedness of all things and the power of love and appreciation. We hold reverence for all life.

We welcome those who wish to share their journey with us through their insights, reflections, experience and creative self-expression.

We are open to inspiration and recognize that our openness to others' ideas may enhance our own awareness and expansion.

We meet our basic human need to socialize, bond, cooperate, celebrate and have fun, in a warm-hearted way, through a variety of events and activities.

We acknowledge our opportunity to be agents of change in the world and we encourage and support service to others through individual and group activity.

We share our sacred space with the larger community.

With gratitude, we live thoughtfully on the Earth with kindness and compassion for all.

We welcome you.

Sunday Service - 11 am

Working for you - Your Board of Directors

President	Esther Hart	250-896-5933
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Newsletter Submissions welcomed by the 21st. of each month

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Sunday Service Schedule for September 2011

September Theme: SHIFTING GEARS

Sept. 4th **Resistance or Flow**

Moderator: Susan Hart
Meditation: Laura Lane
Speaker: Joan Hopper

Sept. 11th **Chaos or Change**

Moderator: Sanjara Omoniyi
Meditation: Trish Coleman
Speaker: Dancing Wolf

Sept. 18th **Conscious Relationship**

Moderator: Bernadine Sperling
Meditation: Marie Logan
Speakers: Brian Martin et al (Panel of 3)

Sept. 25th **Community Service**

Title: Shift Happens
Moderator: Bob Winkenhower
Meditation: Paul Monfette

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We've all heard it said and no doubt experienced ourselves that keeping our relationships conscious can be extremely challenging at times. This is particularly true in our intimate relationships; for some of us it is not always easy to remember that our partner is 'our mirror', and it often takes great courage to be willing to see this, for it requires a willingness to reclaim the disowned parts of ourselves. Here we again look forward to 'getting some more tools' for our toolkit' or, perhaps pulling out those rusty ones and spraying some WD-40 on them! September 25th, the last Sunday of the month, is our Community Service. The theme is "Shift Happens". We will have an opportunity to break into small groups and share how this topic relates to us personally.

At this time I am reminded of the first few lines of the "Serenity Prayer" by Reinhold Niebuhr:

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Submitted by Bernadine Sperling, Spiritual Directions Committee



Happy Birthday
We Celebrate With You!

September 23-----Ella Brown



UP CLOSE
With Joyanna Wilkinson

FREEDOM TO BE ME....

I was blessed to be born into a warm and adventurous family in what was then the cowtown known as Calgary. I was 16 when I went with my parents on a world trip which started my wanderlust... and then, living up to expectations I married at 18, a man that I fell in love with. I continued within my career in husband's place of business, even after we were blessed with 2 daughters. As in my upbringing, we had help and family that allowed me the freedom to continue my work....."I was free to be me" in the light of the time. Looking back I realize I was free within some very confining mores. It was the gift of disease that finally woke me up to a different reality. I knew I could not continue in the marriage and certainly was not fit to bring up my children. The wrench of leaving my children in Calgary took many years of healing to overcome. I re-married a few years later. David and I lived a life of discovery. After his studies in Pullman Wa. We traveled Canada in our van to choose a place to settle and here I still am. David's work took him to Vancouver and I chose to stay here and enrolled in Camosun College in the Criminology course.

It was then that I began to discover who I am. By "accident" I was introduced to a New Thought Church, The Centre for Self Awareness. There I learned that I co-create my life with the Higher Power. It was a stunning revelation. Like it or not, I co-created my life for better or for worse. After 14 years I came to the Church of Truth and heard a member say" I knew I needed to dance a different dance" and here I still am in this wonder full place of co-creation.

Now, as an elder,, I live a fulfilled and joy filled life. That came about in a way I would not have consciously chosen, that of losing the money I planned to live on in my elder years.



Oneness Wednesday Equinox Celebration

Join D. Joan, Bob and Brian for a transmogrifying celebration of the equinox at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, September 21st. YOU will be invited to tone/chant, read a line or two of magical poetry along with DJ and the two Bees! Above all, it will be fun. Poems will be on tap for you

to read or just listen to, and will range from the uplifting to the dark side and the many facets in between. Come join us - we're friendly.

Sunday August 14 Change an Opportunity

Walls

By Gordon Thurston

For those that might not be up to speed we have had a concern about the health of this building of late and the disease that it suffers from is euphemistically known by anyone living in greater Victoria the last few years as a leaky condo syndrome – the malaise being mould.

However as many of us have come to know of late this diagnosis has been altered slightly, which means that the fate of this building has changed somewhat – or at least there is now room for some optimism. Dan Walters of Morrison Hershfield, an engineering firm who assessed this church's wet wall problem, has said that there is a chance, with repairs to the roof, caulking and sealing, that the building could dry out and it is reasonable to assume then that it could be usable for years to come with but normal maintenance. Without any evidence of mould now and a successful re-assessment in a year's time the crisis we thought we would have to face, which even included selling and moving, might just be over. That being the case then our prayers for direction and guidance will then have to also change to those of thanksgiving and we can then entertain getting back to normal – and that would be wonderful.

However for many of us that would have to be a “new” normal because the old one will never work quite the same way ever again. Why, because these walls hold for us new meaning and purpose now. Having had to confront such a crisis we have had to envisage the many alternatives of what to do about this problem including the possibility of doing without this building altogether. As a result we are now a different people, at least in some ways. We have arrived at a new consciousness about what this place means to us. Then again I suppose that is what a crisis does; it makes us aware of things that were not part of our consciousness before. So we are the Church of Truth – Community of Conscious Living now with quite a difference. We are in some ways more conscious now than we were. What we did not have to think about before



we now must do – and which includes the question that without this building *what* are we – and perhaps even more introspectively *who* are we, really?

And so that brings *me* to yet another question, what do walls do anyway – and for us *ours* in particular?

So let's think about walls in general for a moment now. Most, if not all walls provide some sort of security (more or less), although with some marked differences depending upon the building. – In fact so much so that some require guards at the doors. Palaces and prisons are perhaps two extremes. The one needs a guard to protect people on the inside from the world outside – and the other protects the world outside from those people on the inside. And yet most walls, like around our homes, are created for a different kind of security, warmth and protection from the elements notwithstanding. They also provide an intimacy and freedom of expression that can be shared in ways that are understandably private, if not quite sacred. Then again when it comes to the “sacred” some walls do that in a very definite, purposeful way. Obviously people who come together for religious reasons feel they need protection somehow, or at least to be separated somewhat from the profane and contaminating world out there. For the purists those walls provide a sense of unadulterated sacredness.

However for me that leads to the underlying and yet unavoidable question, what is this “sacred” thing we feel we need, and then want to protect? Religious people often call the place to do that the house of God – but then that brings us to the ancient dilemma of how does one actually *house* God – only to be followed by one that asks, can we actually provide a sacred space in order to adequately do that? Can the ultimate creative spirit in the world ever be contained in such a manner anyway? In fact if God is God then that might just be quite an absurd notion anyway. Perhaps it is not God at all that needs containment, but rather we that do.

So, given our new sense of consciousness here at the Church of Truth – community of Conscious Living – that leads me to the question, what do these walls here actually mean to us? What do they do or provide?

As we have found out throughout this wet wall crisis they have had a slightly different meaning to many and a markedly different sense of purpose to a few others. Perhaps it is safe to say that for just about everyone here there ‘**is**’ a need for a place to come and to just ‘**be**’, apart from the world for a while. And yet how healthy, permanent or thick do these walls then need to be in order to provide that feeling? And of course the question for those of us attempting to establish a new sense of normal given our leaky condo dilemma has been do they actually need to be these particular walls in order to do so? It has been a real conundrum for many, if not most – and yet when it comes to the issue of sacredness the problem in general is not at all a new one. This question about walls and our awareness of where the sacred really lies, inside or out, is in fact an ancient one. All religious people have struggled with it and continue to do so in an ongoing and soul searching way. For me, working as I do with people who for the most part have abandoned religious communities altogether, I have come to realize that even the non-religious, those utterly secular souls out there, are really in the same dilemma; they just do not realize it. For me it comes down to what matters most to people – those ultimate things in life that matter more than life itself, and which for each person somehow needs protecting. Is that not what the sacred is, those things that matter more than we as individuals? And it usually requires a physical space in order to be so honoured – like a clubhouse or a special meeting place, even a favourite table in a restaurant or perhaps more so a spot by a lake or river where we look beyond the mundane.

The truth is that we as human beings have struggled with the question of the sacred since time immemorial – even after leaving Africa 50,000 years ago when adopting a nomadic way of life as we set about populating the earth. A fascinating documentary on that very thing is called the Journey of Man – The Story of the Human Species produced for the PBS. In fact not until agriculture enabled us to settle down beginning 5,000 years ago did we even think about anything permanent, including immovable walls – and creating a fixed, man-made place for worship. And yet we were nevertheless and in fact first and foremost, spiritual. And that was because we were nomadic. Our spiritual and religious roots were established in our wandering states. There are some excellent books recently written about that. One is called the Faith Instinct – How Religion Evolved and How It Endures, by Nicholas Wade.

His thesis is that the very motivating drive that enabled us to survive as a people on the go after leaving Africa was at base because of religion. We were dependent upon powers both within **and** beyond ourselves because the chances of extinction were very real, very often at the outset of that human journey. And at the base of that religious drive was a moral code that set the health and well being of the tribe or community above all other concerns. We would never have made it otherwise. And in order to keep us true to our collective principles there grew a vision of an ever higher order to things, an overseeing power that kept us true to our mutuality – spirits, gods and ultimately one god. In fact with or without a belief in god the sacred is still very much alive, even amongst atheists. This moral code is written into our DNA, Nicholas Wade contends. And we can appreciate that when we realize that as a people we are essentially nothing on our own. There are no self-made men or women really. We need one another, more than individual life itself. Thus the spiritual within us is deep and unavoidable – with the exception of course of sociopaths and psychopaths. That need for a sense of connection and belonging is what matters more than just about anything else – and might just give us an insight into the desire to create special walls to remind us of that human condition – and to protect us from losing sight of that fundamental, even sacred truth.

One of the many amazing things about being a theologian of sorts from the Judeo-Christian perspective is that the Bible, and the Old Testament in particular, describes that attempt to understand the sacred better. Moreover as a narrative it describes very well that struggle as mankind makes the shift from a nomadic way of life to an agricultural based one as we began to create established territories called countries, complete with supreme rulers, called kings. And so along with establishing definite territorial borders came the problem of what to do with our religiousness – what to do with our gods and for the Hebrew people the one supreme God. And it all came down to the question of walls – and how they either enhance or inhibit our consciousness when it comes to honouring the sacred amongst us.

The narrative in II Samuel 4 reads like this. It is a conversation between the second king to rule Israel and the prophet of God, Nathan. Prior to having a king the rulers of Israel were called judges, and they were but individuals who came to the fore as leaders only when all the tribes needed to band together against a common enemy. This new role of king in this narrative is filled by none other than the shepherd of Goliath fame, David – although in a way he is really the first king to be so well established on the throne because he has taken up permanent residence in an actual wooden house. The story goes like this:

Now when the king (King David) dwelt in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies round about, the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See how I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart; for the Lord is with you.”

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, “Go and tell my servant David, “Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house of cedar to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel by saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”

The account goes on to state that it was not for David to replace the tent with a building made of wood. That would be something for his successor, Solomon, to do. And interestingly after Solomon biblical historians have noted that that is when their troubles as the people of God really began. The temple got destroyed several times by their enemies, believing that that was the way to completely demoralize and defeat them once and for all. However not only did that not happen but when they were thoroughly beaten by good old Nebuchadnezzar their temple was not only destroyed but they were taken into captivity in Babylon where they should have been lost even to themselves – and yet that was not at all the case. In fact that is when they really became the people of God because when they were but a few years later given opportunity to go back home to Israel only a few did. The majority had discovered a new normal and realized that they could be the people of God without either borders or walls. The truth be known that period in captivity had become the most prolific literary period in all of biblical history. They wrote more and examined themselves more there than at any other time and they changed dramatically. They caught the old nomadic spirit I suppose, only this time in a new world with a new worldview. What they did was to get back to small, more intimate and mobile communities with which they set off to create little conclave communities throughout the known world – and beyond. That exodus from Babylon became known as the Diaspora – the great dispersion. And when they established their little communities all they needed instead of a temple was a simple meeting place, which came to be known as synagogues.

Interestingly when Saint Paul set off to evangelize the Roman world to the news about Jesus of Nazareth those disparate Jewish communities were used as his stepping stones.

So change and opportunity seem to go hand in hand, especially for the religious amongst us. In fact it might be said that we cannot have one without the other. There is no opportunity without change – and sometimes we even need a crisis in order to make that change. And the only thing that gets in the way, one might argue, are the walls we try to build. So the best I can do is to leave you with your own questions about these walls and walls in general.

Do we have time to break into little knee groups? If we do here's the question. If change is opportunity and opportunity is the result of having to make a change then what is the most recent new normal for you? Or put simply, what opportunity has change created for you?