

## RIGHT SERVICE

photo

by *Jim Gordon*  
President of ILM

Last November, my dining room table in my house in Austin was filled with Christmas gifts I'd bought. The child in me was filled with delight at the thought of the joy these gifts would bring. I had chosen each of them carefully and was pretty sure I had enough time to get those that needed to be sent to the post office in time.

In the midst of my last minute preparations, I received a letter from a friend. She was soliciting funds to help bring sick children for surgery from Siberia to the United States. It was a beautiful letter that made me realize that my approach to Christmas was not all it could be. I had not really been looking beyond the gift-giving aspect of Christmas into the heart of what the holiday is all about. I was not engaging in the ultimate kind of gift-giving, the giving of self in loving service.

My friend's letter really woke me up. I used her appeal to help align myself more fully into the spirit of service. I sent more money than she asked for and included her appeal with each Christmas card I sent. Beyond these acts of giving, which were linked to the holidays, I began to reflect that service is an opportunity that is available year round. Service can be a path, a way of life.

When I was younger, I learned that service is one of the trinity of pathways we are given to turn inward and upward. The other paths are meditation (or prayer) and study (not outward study, but the study of Self). Sometimes these three are linked. For example, meditation and study might activate the greater parts of ourselves, filling us with an overflow of love. Service then becomes a way to put that love into action - changing love into loving - allowing us to be filled with even more love.

I learned also that there are several keys to "right" service, or service that aligns the server in spiritual action. The first, and maybe most fundamental, has to do with the presence of the uplifting feeling of joy when giving. Feeling the joy - rather than a strong sense of obligation or "should" - is for me an internal barometer that my service is on the right track. On the other hand, if I'm doing service

primarily because I feel I *must* or *ought* to do it - feelings that are more dispiriting than spirit-filled - I've found that it is better to hold myself back from performing the action until I can again feel the joy.

Part of joyful giving is a process I call "giving from the overflow." I first learned about the overflow from one of my teachers, who one day walked up to me and asked me to give him \$10. I reached in my pocket and found only a couple of dollars and tried to give him that. "That's not enough," he told me. "I need \$10." Exasperated, I told him I'd give him all I had in my pocket and then try to get him the rest. It was then that he stopped me.

"Look what you just did. You had only a couple of dollars and some change, right? You gave all that to me and left yourself with nothing. Right there you hurt yourself in order to make me feel better." He explained that giving service to someone while hurting yourself doesn't serve anyone. "Giving falsely isn't giving at all. If anything, you may hurt yourself and others. Always give from a place of overflow." In other words, we must first take care of ourselves, and then we can take care of others.

The right sequence of giving moves along what I call "the line of authority." This line of authority starts from the Self and then radiates outward. After we've served ourself, we can then serve in turn our mate, children, extended family, friends, associates, and society. It isn't wise to jump levels and take care of those far away from ourselves without first taking care of ourself and those close to us.

A final key of service has to do with giving without expectation of return. We know we're in trouble if we're doing the opposite, if our service is like a bumper sticker that advertises how great we are. That means that we're giving from the false self or ego. To avoid that trap, many adopt the practice of giving anonymously. That way, it's hard for the ego to get in the way.

If we choose to do so, there are many ways to participate in the consciousness of service. Once we've opened our hearts to the loving action of service, we're likely to want to repeat it and make service a way of life. In doing so, we will discover a happy paradox at the core of giving: giving *is* receiving. Through giving we participate in God's loving, and open ourselves to receive the grace of God's abundant joy. ■

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# THE INNER LIGHT

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photo

by Steven McAfee  
ILM Midwest Coordinator

Every now and then someone will ask me what I do for a living. As soon as I tell them, they want to know, "What is Inner Light Ministries?" The name seems to invite exploration. Then I find myself looking for ways to explain ILM, what it stands for, and what it does. Today, in an attempt to answer those questions for myself, I decided to turn to the dictionary, *Webster's Collegiate, 10th Edition*, published in 1993, to be exact. I intended to look up "inner" and then "light." To my amazement, Webster's contained the phrase "inner light!" It is defined there as "*a divine presence held to enlighten and guide the soul.*" I began to contemplate the implications...

The first thing I recalled was the New Testament story of Saul of Tarsus, a Jewish persecutor of the followers of Jesus. Saul went through a remarkable, life-changing encounter with an inner experience of tremendous light. "Suddenly, while he was travelling to Damascus and just before he reached the city, there came a light all around him. He fell to the ground, and then he heard a voice saying, 'Saul, why are you persecuting me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' he asked, and the voice answered, 'I am Jesus, and you are persecuting me.' The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless...they could see no one." (Acts 9:3-7) We know this encounter to be an "inner" experience, because the men who were with Saul saw nothing. Afterward, as a result of his experience with this "inner light," he changed his name to "Paul" and dedicated his remaining years to tirelessly spreading the good news ("gospel") of Christ, his lord and master, who had appeared and spoken to him from within that great light.

Next, I remembered the Buddhist story of Siddhartha Guatama, a rich, noble young prince who was sorely troubled and perplexed by the suffering in the world and who was said to have attained "*enlightenment*" meditating beneath a tree. The traditional story is recounted in the National Geographic Society's *Great Religions of the World*: "Dusk had come, and the resolute prince, on his 35th birthday, sat down cross-legged beneath a leafy pipal tree. He touched his right hand to the ground so earth could bear witness. 'Let my skin wither, my hands grow numb, my bones dissolve; until I have attained enlightenment, I will not rise from here.' When he finally rose, he arose as the 'Buddha', the 'awakened or enlightened one.'" As

a result of his experience with the inner light, he attained a state of blissful peace and spiritual awakening. Thereafter, he devoted his life to teaching others how to achieve that same inner state of peace and awakening. Recalling the experiences of Saul and Siddhartha served as dramatic illustrations to me of what can happen when one experiences what Webster calls that "divine presence" and how powerfully it can "enlighten and guide the soul."

The "inner light" is also prevalent in the Hindu tradition. In the Bhagavad Gita, the 5th discourse, verse 24 says, "He who is *illuminated within*, is happy within, and goes to the eternal peace." As in the experience of Paul, the texts of the Gita often associate the inner light with a "master-person" or "great soul," known as a "Mahatma" in the Sanskrit language. For example, verse 12 of the 11th discourse states, "If the splendor of a thousand suns were to blaze out together in the sky, this might resemble the glory of a Mahatma."

It is apparent to me that although religions differ widely in their beliefs and practices, the association of "light" with God is an almost universal theme among them. While today some people may think that the idea of an "inner light" or an indwelling "divine presence" is a foreign concept, or a "new age" idea, or some form of mystical nonsense; it is, in fact, an age-old tradition contained in the great religions of the world. And it is far more than that. It is a timeless reality.

To me, the heart of our work in Inner Light Ministries is to inspire people to step into the divine presence of the inner light within themselves. The programs and materials we develop are intended to offer what we have found to be practical methods of prayer, meditation, forgiveness, study, and loving service through which anyone may experience for themselves the grace, love and power of the inner light. Within this inner light, we find an enduring sanctuary of peace, comfort, strength, and clarity; and we discover a direct link with God. But the inner light is just that: inner. It can only be found within. We can read about it in books, hear tales of its grace and power in holy scriptures, and share ideas about it with one another. But it is only when we finally learn to look deeply within ourselves that we can hope to truly find it. And its power to transform us comes from our encountering it as an experience, not merely as a belief. It wasn't belief that turned Saul of Tarsus into Paul, the apostle, or the despairing prince Siddhartha into the enlightened Buddha, it was the Light they beheld within. ■

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# CREATING JOY

photo

by *Laura Kesten-Beaver*  
ILM Minister

Last summer, a midwest Circle of Women presented me with a cute little puppet monkey. She had a frilly dress and a bonnet to match, and her rosey cheeks glowed in the light of our Candle Garden. My eyes welled up with tears. I was overwhelmed that I was being given a gift for no occasion. I felt immersed in love. The women told me that I needed to give her a name before we all left the Circle. As I watched the flames flicker in this little monkey's eyes, I felt so much joy - JOY. Yes, that would be her name. And then and there I decided that I wanted to create more of this feeling of joy in my life - and that JOY would be my mentor in this endeavor.

I confess that since that event took place last summer I set my monkey on my shelf and haven't given much effort to creating more joy in my life. When I think about creating more joy, it feels like it will cost me a lot of money or that I'll need to add more hours in my day in order to have the time to be joyful. So, I found myself putting it off. Then just the other day I spotted JOY on the shelf again. I picked her up, warmly remembered that she was my mentor, and resolved to do an experiment: for one week I would try to bring more joy into my life; no holds barred on time or money.

I puzzled over whether this was an impossible quest, just a "tilting at windmills." To get my feet on the ground, I decided to consult Webster's Dictionary. Webster's defines joy as "a feeling of great happiness or delight" and gives the following synonyms: pleasure, enjoyment, ecstasy. Next, I remembered the feeling I had experienced in getting my monkey, I knew that I *had* experienced joy. These women, through an act of kindness, had given me "a feeling of great happiness." But how could I create it for myself? With little practice at bringing forth joy - or so I thought - I decided to plan out my week. Each day I would act on at least one activity which would bring forth the feeling of joy, happiness, delight, pleasure, enjoyment or ecstasy.

The first thing on my list was to play a sound effects tape at the one-room school my daughter attends and at which I sometimes volunteer - a tape of a woman laughing hysterically. I hid the tape player and started to play it in the middle of a lesson. Everyone stopped, looked around at each other, got little quirky looks on their faces, and before long, everyone was in an uproar. Our laughter began slowly, then gradually got louder, *happier*, more *joyful*. Bingo! This gift of

humor brought everyone in the school into a more joyful frame of mind and heart.

The next day was just for me. I lit candles, got a CD spinning soft music, steeped a pot of peppermint tea, drew an aromatic hot bath, took up a delicious book and locked the door. The next hour *pleasurably* belonged to me. Eureka! Taking the time to be kind to myself, and allowing myself to relax into the moment, created a feeling of great joy for me.

During the rest of the week, I climbed a tree, gave my husband a foot massage, made bread, watched funny movies, wrote a message to myself on a mirror, danced with my daughter, wrote a thank you note to my chiropractor and held open a door for a mother and her twin toddlers. None of these things cost me much time or money! And each time there was a payoff for me: a feeling of happiness, pleasure, delight, enjoyment ... *joy!* I then realized where my quest for a sure-fire method to create joy in my life had taken me: to the next act of kindness, behind which joy was ever waiting.

Joy is simply the result of doing acts of kindness for ourselves and others. We can find joy in our everyday lives by creating such acts. Planning simple acts of kindness can be very easy. For example, write a love note in your child's lunch box, let someone in front of you on the freeway, call a friend and say "I love you," light a candle and have lunch by yourself, play music loudly and dance. You can use your imagination to find lots of ways of bringing joy into you life. You just have to begin.

Joy is a *choice*. ■

## INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES MIDWEST RETREAT

# LOVE AND LOVING

(based on Jim Gordon's book, *Love and Loving*)

with Jim Gordon, Steven McAfee  
and Laura Kesten-Beaver

**October 25-26-27, 1996**

Fri. 7:30 PM - Sun. 12:00 Noon  
at Potawatomi Inn, Pokagon State Pk, Angola, IN

*For details, contact Steven McAfee at  
219: 485-2167*

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## ABOUT ILM

INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES (ILM) is a nonprofit outreach organization founded in the fundamental principles of ancient and esoteric Christianity. It is dedicated to the development and balancing of the fourfold nature of the individual. Towards this goal, it provides education and services concerned with the integration of the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical aspects of the self, and also provides publications and materials that aid in this process.

Among its fundamental tenets is that we really are "temples of the Holy Spirit." As we seek and express this presence within, we find the peace, love, power, and wisdom we all so earnestly desire. The many services of ILM are geared towards this path of individual unfoldment – such as meditation, study, and prayer on an individual and group basis.

Service to humanity and the planet is its second major emphasis, and ILM encourages individual service, in any of a wide variety of possible forms, as a vital aspect of our daily experience. Please write or phone for more information.

### ILM BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE

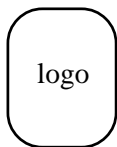
*Love and Loving*  
*The Knowing of God*  
*The Staff of the Shepherd*

These three books by Jim Gordon are available at \$6 each. To order, call Tom Beaver at 512: 894-4805.

### A QUOTE

*To Love, we must let go.*  
*To Love, we must be willing to change.*  
*To Love, we must be willing to evolve.*  
*To Love, we must simply be willing.*  
*All Else will follow from that.*

– from **Love and Loving**



### INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES

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# THE INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES

## CALENDAR

### CLASSES AND SESSIONS WITH JIM GORDON

*(For details and workshop reservations, contact Laura and Tom Kesten-Beaver at 512: 894-4805.)*

**September, 1996:** Classes to be commenced in **Austin, TX**. A flyer containing details will be sent out to the Austin area.

**July 21:** "AWAKENING TO OUR LOVING," an Inner Light Ministries Workshop, with Jim Gordon, Steven McAfee and Laura Kesten-Beaver, at the Prince Kuhio Hotel in **Honolulu, HI**. This experiential workshop provides numerous opportunities to get in touch with our inner Spirit of Love. A flyer containing details will be sent out to the Honolulu area.

**October 25, 26, 27:** "LOVE AND LOVING," an Inner Light Ministries retreat with Jim Gordon, Steven McAfee and Laura Kesten-Beaver, based on Jim Gordon's book, *Love and Loving*, at Potawatomi Inn, **Pokagon State Park, Angola, IN**.

### CLASSES, WORKSHOPS, AND RETREATS WITH STEVEN MCAFEE

*(For details and workshop reservations, contact Steven in Ft. Wayne, IN at 219: 485-2167)*

**Weekly Tuesday Evening Classes:** 7:30 - 9:00 pm in "Fellowship Hall" of Unity Christ Church at 3232 Crescent Avenue in **Fort Wayne**. No classes in July or August; classes resume in September.

**Sunday Morning Services:** June 30 at 10:45 am at the YMCA Villa in **Ft. Wayne**. A study series will be held weekly starting in September in Ft. Wayne at 9:00 AM at Unity Christ Church: topic, *The Gospel of John: A Mystical View of Christ*.

**September 27-28:** "FAMILIES" WORKSHOP, with Steven McAfee and Laura Kesten-Beaver, at the Unity Christ Church in **Ft. Wayne**. This workshop provides fun experiences in strengthening family traditions. Friday evening, adults only; Saturday, adults and children (ages 5 and up).

### WORKSHOPS WITH LAURA KESTEN-BEAVER

*(For details and workshop reservations, contact Laura in Austin, TX at 512: 894-4805)*

**June 14-15:** "CIRCLE OF WOMEN - MOONTIME AWARENESS" WEEKEND WORKSHOP, in **Ft. Wayne, IN**. In this workshop, women celebrate that time in their lives when they crossed over from girlhood to womanhood. For details and workshop reservations, contact Vicki Wagner at 219: 744-5380.

**June 21-22:** "CIRCLE OF WOMEN - MOONTIME AWARENESS" WEEKEND WORKSHOP, in **Kalamazoo, MI**. For details and workshop reservations, contact Laura Kesten.

**June 28-30:** "PEACEMAKER" WEEKEND WORKSHOP, for **men and women**, in **Kalamazoo, MI**. This is a beautiful experiential workshop based on Jean Houston's book, *Manual for the Peacemaker: An Iroquois Legend to Heal Self and Society*. For details and workshop reservations, contact Laura Kesten.

**July 12-13:** "CIRCLE OF WOMEN - MOONTIME AWARENESS" WEEKEND WORKSHOP, in **Urbana, OH**. For details and workshop reservations, contact Susan Zion at 513: 484-3090.

**September 21:** "CIRCLE OF MAIDENS" girls workshop, at Kesten-Beaver house in **Dripping Springs, TX**. For details and workshop reservations, contact Laura Kesten.

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# A MEDITATION ON LOVE

(from Jim Gordon's book, *Love and Loving*)

**A**n exercise we can all do... is to meditate on the Love of God inside us. We just find a quiet and comfortable place where we won't be disturbed for a little while. Then, with eyes closed and preferably sitting, as opposed to lying down (so we don't fall asleep), we begin with the sincere desire to find the living Love of God. We might offer a silent prayer such as, "Heavenly Father-Mother God, in this moment of inner stillness, I ask Your help that I may come to truly know the living Love within me." The exact words are not so important, but taking a moment to express the sincere desire to know of His Love can be a very helpful way to begin.

Next, allow yourself to become very still and relaxed, releasing all thoughts and concerns, and all tensions and tightness. For some of us, this may be very easy, especially if we have already had a lot of experience in relaxation, meditation, or visualization exercises. Others of us, though, may need to spend time practicing just these beginning steps so that we *can* begin to relax, let go, and become truly still whenever we want to.

Once we have become very relaxed and our minds are quiet, the next step is to just imagine ourselves surrounded and uplifted in the gentle, radiant light of the Spirit. We might picture ourselves as if we were sitting in a fluffy white cloud or a misty bubble of peace. As we hold this image for a few moments, we simply affirm that we *are* now relaxed, we *are* now at peace, and we allow ourselves to be fully here in this moment now.

Next, imagine that you are sitting in a waterfall of God's Loving Spirit. See this pure, crystalline river of Love flowing down from above and cascading over your head and shoulders. Imagine that this flowing Love is moving throughout your entire being on every level, and affirm silently, "My

body is filled with the Love of God. My emotions are bathed in the Love of God. My mind is soothed by the Love of God. My spirit is renewed in the Love of God." These and similar affirmations help to strengthen the visualization and to bring us into an ever greater attunement with that Loving presence which is always within us.



Once we have a clear mental image, it is time to stop all thoughts and to concentrate on this image of the Loving. Simply focus on this river of Love moving to you and through you, and hold your attention focused on this one image for as long as you comfortably can. Even one or two minutes can be helpful and powerful, although twenty to thirty minutes is recommended. The idea here is just to hold a pure concentration on the image of a river of Loving. If your

mind wanders, just gently return to your point of focus, perhaps with an affirmation such as, "I see Love, only Love, only Love."

What we are presenting here is an exercise that begins with affirmation and visualization and then moves on into strict concentration, which is the first stage of true meditation. The steps could be summarized as follows:

- 1) relax your body, still your mind, and let go of the thoughts of the day,
- 2) focus on an image of the Spirit, affirm your inner stillness, and ask for assistance as you begin your meditation,
- 3) imagine a clear and perfect waterfall of God's Loving flowing to you and through you, and hold this image through several minutes of concentration.

At the end of the exercise, gently return to an outer focus and take a moment to feel what you feel right now. With practice, you will find that you really can and do "connect" to a living presence of Love, and you really do begin to "take it with you" as you return to the outer world and go on about your daily activities. ■

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