

# SILVER LININGS



CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)  
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## TOP TEN SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR OLDER ADULTS

As reported in a last month's issue, Nancy Gordon, who served as the Executive Director of the Center for Spirituality and Aging, based at Walnut Village Anaheim, has retired. Many months ago, she issued a paper entitled, "Top Ten Spiritual Practices for Older Adults." Your Editor has chosen to reproduce this document in this month's issue of "Silver Linings," with gratitude to Nancy for her insights regarding both this topic and her wisdom about aging.

"Our spirituality is the core of who we are and our way of being in the world. The following is a list of suggested spiritual practices that can deepen our awareness of the essential spiritual part of life and provide frameworks for navigating aging with grace and zest.

**Practice Breathing** -- Breathing is something we do without thinking, yet paying attention to our breathing brings us to our center while, at the same time, bringing us to an awareness of our body, the address where our soul lives. Sustained attention to breathing becomes a form of centering prayer or meditation. Even a short period of consciously, slowing breathing in and breathing out reminds us of the gift of having the breath of life and centers us for what lies ahead.

**Practice Gratitude** -- Looking for and noting the small and large graces and gifts of each day infuses our lives with meaning, even in the midst of great difficulties. Expressing our gratitude--to God, to the person who blessed our day with helpfulness and humor, or to our gratitude journal--contributes to becoming a person for whom others are grateful.

**Practice Wonder** -- Poet Mary Oliver in 'Instructions for Living,' says: 'Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.' This poem captures the heart of practicing wonder; seeing what is present all around us and being astonished by it, whether it is a sunset, snowcapped mountain peaks, the call of a bird, or the sweetness of a baby's smile. When we share our wonders, we build connections between ourselves and others, ourselves and the world.

**Practice Creativity** -- Many of us gave up on art in grade school when we discovered that we couldn't draw. But discovering new mediums for expressing our innate creativity can be a powerful antidote to the boredom of passing days. Challenge yourself to find creative solutions to old problems; set out to try new routes and experience new things. And see your life as a creative work in progress. What do you need for this portion of the journey?

**Practice Kindness** -- We don't always have control of our life circumstances or what is going on around us. What we can control is our response, and we can almost always find a way to be kind. Giving others the benefit of the doubt or making that extra small gesture, doesn't cost much in the end but contributes to our soul's growth and expands our capacity for empathy and compassion.

**Practice Releasing** -- Aging has sometimes been compared to a process of stripping down to the basics. Spiritually mature people have discovered that this stripping down process can usher in a new sense of freedom. We can cooperate with the process by voluntarily releasing our excess possessions, unrealistic expectations of others and ourselves, and old grudges and resentments. New energy is discovered when we release what we no longer need or what is ultimately harming us or weighing us down.

**Practice Connecting** -- If we are fortunate to live long enough, we find that with added years our circle of friends and family diminishes in size. Yet studies after study has shown that those with significant ties of others fare better in the aging process. So practice making new connections and keep old ones vital.

(Continued on the next page.)

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Don't wait for others to contact you--pick up the phone, write that note, invite a new neighbor for coffee, or send your grandchild an e-mail. And if you value connection with God, put yourself in the places where you make that connection most easily on a regular basis.

**Practice Resting** -- One of the laments of aging is the increased lack of energy and the inability to do as much or as many of the activities that we previously enjoyed. We live in a wider culture that values and validates productivity and busyness. A counter-intuitive response is to actively practice resting--intentionally taking an hour each day, a day each week, where we give ourselves permission to do nothing but rest in whatever way that renews and restores us. A restful pause, a time that is unhurried and unharried, can be a delightful oasis and give us a fresh perspective on our life.

**Practice Making Music** -- Not everyone is musically talented, but we all have a need for melody and rhythm. Sing in the shower, with a choir, or with the radio, but find a way to sing. If singing is too much to ask, join a drum circle or find another way to keep the beat going. Dance to the music that others make. Find a way to join in the music of your life for an increased sense of vitality and belonging.

**Practice Being Who You Are** -- The goal of the spiritual journey of life is to become our most authentic self. After a certain age, it no longer matters so much what people think of us. What matters is that we are being true to ourselves, our own uniqueness. Say yes to the things that bring you joy, and quit doing the things that don't. Explore those parts of yourself that you left behind as you climbed the career ladder or raised a family.

**Practice Giving Yourself Away** -- Listen to your life in all of its complexity and give thanks for the journey you've taken. And then share yourself, your wisdom, and your joy with the wider world."

This is a list of ten very valuable suggestions for nurturing and growing in one's spirituality. It is hoped by your Editor, that all of you who read and review this list of the "Top Ten Spiritual Practices," will find many ways in which to incorporate each and every one of them in your journey--your life journey and also your faith journey. Thanks, Nancy!

#### STILL ALMOST FOUR MONTHS AWAY

The 2017 edition of the Don Shelton Memorial Golf Classic, sponsored by the PSW Region, is four months from now. We want all Senior Golfers to know that planning for the September 18 event is already underway. Also, we want you to know that several Seniors are members of the Golf Tournament Committee. They include Leroy Dunson, Abundant Life Christian Church, Los Angeles, who also represents Project IMPACT; Dan Romero and Jerry Stinson, represent the United Church of Christ, Southern California Conference; Donna Woodbridge, First Christian Church, Fullerton, who serves as Secretary and Auction Coordinator; Lary Row, First Christian Church, Orange, who also represents Eastmont Community Center, plus the Co-Chairs, Pat Vannoy and Ed Linberg, both of whom are members of First Christian Church, Fullerton. Hank Smith Delhaven Christian Church, is a member of the committee, too, but due to health issues he's been unable to attend meetings so far this year.

#### FEATURED HYMN

**"O BREATH OF LIFE" IS A HYMN FOR THE PENTECOST SEASON. THIS, IN THE OPINION OF YOUR EDITOR, IS ONE WELL-WORTH INTRODUCING TO YOUR CONGREGATION AS ITS FLOWING MELODY SHOULD BE EASY TO SING.**

**"O BREATH OF LIFE, COME SWEEPING THROUGH US, REVIVE YOUR CHURCH WITH LIFE AND POWER. O BREATH OF LIFE COME, CLEANSE, RENEW US, AND FIT YOUR CHURCH TO MEET THIS HOUR.**

**O WIND OF GOD, COME, BEND US, BREAK US, TILL HUMBLY WE CONFESS OUR NEED. THEN IN YOUR TENDERNESS REMAKE US, REVIVE, RESTORE, FOR THIS WE PLEAD.**

**O BREATH OF LOVE, COME BREATHE WITHIN US, RENEWING THOUGHT AND WILL AND HEART. COME, LOVE OF CHRIST, AFRESH TO WIN US; REVIVE YOUR CHURCH IN EVERY PART."**

**THIS HYMN WAS WRITTEN BY BESSIE PORTER HEAD IN 1920. THE HYMN TUNE WAS COMPOSED BY CLEMENT C. SCHOLEFIELD IN 1874. THE TUNE IS "ST. CLEMENT."**

**THIS HYMN IS NO. 250 IN THE CHALICE HYMNAL.**

