

# Unity of Gulfport

1700 E. Railroad Street  
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December, 2019

## Gratitude and Surrender to the Highest Good

My gratitude is overflowing. As I write this, I am anticipating Thanksgiving Day and being with family and friends and allowing love to flow in, through and around me. This love, accompanied by enormous gratitude for everything and everyone in my life returns back into the world as a powerful force. Last week, I spoke of gratitude, intentional gratitude and *Gratitude in Advance*. I used the well-known saying:

*Gratitude in Advance is the Most Powerful Creative Force in the Universe.*

With the most powerful creative force in the Universe at our command, we need to use it well and often. Perhaps every moment, we should use this creative power.

For those of you who visit Unity of Gulfport on a regular or occasional basis, thank you so much for joining us in spiritual growth and fellowship. Thank you for showing up in our lives. One of the things we remind each other often is to have gratitude for every large and small thing in your life.

If you are going through a difficult time, surrender it to the Source of All That Is. Does that mean you surrender it and sit back and do nothing? No, you surrender the outcome that you assumed would occur and allow the Universe to fill in the blanks. If you need a job, look and be open. Say, "Thank you God for helping me to understand that the perfect solution is on its way." Then, take a step, go for an interview, talk to people. When the right situation comes along, you will most likely look back and say, "wow, wasn't that amazing how that worked out." Throughout the process, be grateful all the time for everything, pray and give thanks in advance for the happy outcome that will arrive.

Our musicians shared a beautiful Karen Drucker song with us last Sunday.

### **Morning Prayer: I Will Surrender**

I will surrender to my greatest, highest good  
I will release any fear that blocks my way.  
For every step I take is taken in pure faith,  
And I am stronger every moment every day.

My mind is willing, and my heart is open wide.  
I trust my instincts and let Spirit be my guide.  
I vow to live a life that's real and true and free,  
As I continue walking in this mystery.

There may be walls,  
there may be roadblocks in my way,  
But I can choose to take a higher path each day.  
And now I know that what I thought was safe and sound,  
Was only habit and regret that held me down.  
I will surrender to my greatest, highest good.....

Surrender to your greatest, highest good. Have faith that the solution to every problem is on its way. Just know it. Claim it. Surrender how you thought things would be, pray for the highest good, stay poised and ready to accept the good flowing back in because it will.

I hope you have a joyous, healthy and peaceful holiday season. Love to all, Rev. Judy

# Advent Is Always Arriving

(Excerpt) By Rev. Kelly Isola

I grew up with Advent as an integral part of my religion. For a month, we engaged in a daily ritual of lighting a candle on a wreath and reading particular scriptures from a small booklet—the Hebrew and Christian scriptures alike. It also typically involved singing a song or two. Mom was lucky if she could get us to sing one song, but the one I remember is “O Come, O Come Emmanuel.” I never understood why. Today, I do. The word *Emmanuel* means “God with us.” More than anything in life, I want God right here and right now in my life, in your life, between us, through us, and as us.

Is that not what Advent is *really* all about? That God is with us *now*? Instead, throughout the centuries it has become a time of waiting for baby Jesus to arrive. It has become a sentimental month, almost a nostalgic path to December 25. And in some cases it’s almost too cognitive, rather than a practice for us to be irrevocably changed at depth. Advent is preached about as a time to focus our expectations on the birth of the “Christ” in each of us—where we are emptied and surrender to what it means to be the “Christ” in full expression. To me, this means glorifying this human condition—to bring God to this present moment, especially in the most difficult moments. But where do I see it happening as *me* or as *you*?

This is a time of an inward journey, self-reflection, and self-awareness. How else can I know my own blind spots to becoming an ever-expanding expression of God-consciousness, of being Emmanuel? Mystic Thomas Merton says, “Be still. Listen to the stones of the wall. Be silent, they try to speak your name. Listen to the living walls. Who are you? Who are you? Whose silence are you?”

In light of Merton’s directive, what concrete ways am I not demonstrating how powerful it is to be human? Is that not what Jesus’ birth is about—telling us it’s good to be human, to glorify humanity? It’s easy to be spiritual in a cave, but in what concrete ways will I carve out time for my own contemplation that leads me to be Emmanuel? We have entirely too much suffering, devastation, injustice, desolation, loneliness, violence, and poverty on our planet to continue seeing and practicing Advent as a sentimental season about “an infantile Jesus or infantile gospel,” as Father Richard Rohr puts it.

Advent is, above all else, a call to *really* be awake, moving out of our comfort zone, to be in full consciousness, and paying the price that comes with being incredibly alive and aware. Yes, we pay a price during Advent. I pay a price to embrace my humanness in all its glory and all its suffering. You pay a price to engage with your suffering, for “listening to the stones of the wall.” It takes struggles for our light to fully form, to be Emmanuel, “God with us.” Jesus’ one sermon about the kingdom says it is always here *and* always not yet here. This is one of our greatest paradoxes of the spiritual journey.

The kingdom is always here because I can imagine and affirm what “God with us” looks like through me. While moving toward what is most uncomfortable, *and* most important, I can *be* it. I can be God with us—kindness, peace, service, support, faithful, and open with those unlike me. I can be the active Emmanuel among those whom I feel most challenged by—family, friends, colleagues, coworkers; people of different religions, creeds, colors, and politics. I can practice compassion. I can do unto others as they would like to have done unto them. That is the kingdom that is always here.

“I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.”

— Charles Dickens



“I heard the bells on  
Christmas Day  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth,  
good-will to men!”

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



*Making Merry:.....*

**Music Night!**

*Friday, December 6th  
6:30pm*

Please join us for friends, fun,  
and most of all.....  
Pizza!



## Monthly Activity Calendar

Dec 1, 8, 15, 22, 29	Sun	9:15 am 9:30 am 10:30 am 12:30 pm	Discussion Group Live Music Meditation Sunday Service Films of Interest w/Steve Jahncke
Dec 5, 19	Thu	5:30 pm	Toastmasters Group
Dec 6	Fri	6:30 pm	Music Night
Dec 3, 10, 17,	Tues	6:00 pm	Book Study
Dec 7	Sat	6:60 pm	RR Street Acoustic Café
Dec 9	Mon	6:15 pm	Women Within Open Circle
Dec 21	Sat	10-1 pm	Cacao Yoga Experience / Tim
Dec 29	Sun	10:30 am	Burning Bowl Service
Jan 5, 2020	Sun	10:30 am	White Stone Ceremony

## Weekly Meetings

Sunday 9:15 am	Discussion Group
Sunday 9:30 am	Live Music Meditation
Sunday 10:30 am	Sunday Service
Sunday 12:30 pm	Video Series with Steve
Tuesday 8:00 am	Gentle Yoga with Tracy
Tuesday 9:15 am	Women's Prayer Team
Tuesday 6:00 pm	Book Study

## Monthly or twice Monthly Meetings

2nd Monday 6:15-8:30	Woman Within
1st & 3rd Thurs 6 pm	Toastmasters
First Friday 6:30 pm	Music Night
Last Wed 6:00 pm	Sierra Club
4th Friday 5:30 pm	Steak Night
Every Other Sunday: 1:00 ish:	Drumming

**Merry Christmas!**  
*From All of Your Friends at*  
**Unity of Gulfport**



*RR Street Acoustic Café Presents:*

**Ben Bedford**

Saturday, December 7th, 6:30 pm

\$15-20 donation requested (for musician)

## Daily Word Calendar December

sun	mon	tue	wed	thur	fri	sat
1 Hope and Faith	2 Enthusiasm	3 Freedom	4 Healing	5 Protection	6 Prosperity	7 Wonder
8 Peace	9 Celebrate	10 Giving	11 Stillness	12 Forgive	13 Comfort	14 Divine Order
15 Love	16 Breathe	17 Patience	18 Guidance	19 Let Go, Let God	20 Pray for Others	21 World Peace
22 Joy	23 Light	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas	26 Believe	27 Divine Love	28 Wisdom
29 Strength	30 Power	31 Imagination				

### What is a Woman Within Open Circle?

Come experience a community of conscious and authentic women. If you choose, while you are here, you may work on an issue that's coming up in your life. You are also welcome to simply come and be present. Women are amazed at how much can be gained from an evening in one of these circles which is typically 4-12 women. The circles are free and they are a gift to the community by a non-profit organization called Woman Within [womanwithin.org](http://womanwithin.org). The motivation is to share the power of circles with as many women as possible.



2nd Monday - December 9th, Location: Unity of Gulfport

1700 E. Railroad St. Gulfport 39501 Time: 6:15pm to 8:30 pm

Please advise if you are attending Tonia Andersen [misnola@gmail.com](mailto:misnola@gmail.com) or 757 771-2732

# Being the Gift of Christmas

By Mary Manin Morrissey



A *Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens is a well-loved and familiar story to many people. In the character of Ebenezer Scrooge, we are offered an example of someone who is shown how much richer life can be when value is placed on what's meaningful to the heart rather than the pocketbook.

On a cold and blustery night, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his former business partner Jacob Marley, who, like Scrooge, had been a cold and greedy businessman. Right before his own eyes, Scrooge sees the pain and weight that Marley bears from the error of his ways. Scrooge learns that he is to be visited by three more apparitions: the ghosts of Christmases past, present, and future. ... With a new perspective, he chooses to change and makes a decision to be loving and caring himself. We probably don't see ourselves in the character of Scrooge, but he may give us cause to question ourselves and our lives: When we put our head down on a pillow for the very last time, what will really have

mattered to us? Will we have fully lived our God-given ability to love and care, and will we have matured our capacity to make a difference in our own lives and in the lives of others?

We, too, have a choice. As a gift of love, God gives us life. And in life, we have the opportunity to bring mastery to all the elements and circumstances of life. We have the chance to both discover and develop the skills and aptitudes of possibility that are inherent in our nature as children of God.

## The Higher Possibility

During the Christmas season, there is a sweet energy aglow on our planet. For a moment in time, we suspend a certain amount of judgment and criticism. In a world where we are inundated with information and the business of being busy, we take the time to show others that we care, to greet strangers with a smile, to be with loved ones. The best Christmas gift we can give ourselves is to fulfill the possibility of being all that God created us to be. The season really can be more than simply a replay of the Christmases we've had in the past. This year's holiday can be a time of giving shape and form to that higher possibility. When we sing "Let every heart prepare Him room," that preparation is an activity of mind, heart, and spirit where we become a living manger where love abides.

## Light of Love

Some of us may be going through a very dark time in our lives, but just as we did when we were kids playing hide-and-seek, we can still say, "I'll be it! I'll be the light of love shining in my family, my workplace, my part of the world. I'll be the manger and let my heart prepare Him room." We can practice doing this on a daily basis and let our lives be molded and shaped by God's love.

At one time in my life, much of what I had believed about people and circumstances turned out not to be true. I watched the life I had known melt away. I had never before known such darkness. Life presents such challenges: a diagnosis that scares us, a phone call that a child has been injured, or the news that a 401(k) that we thought was safe is gone. During this time of my life, I read from *Dark Night of the Soul* by Saint John of the Cross and the *Twenty-third Psalm*, which helped me walk through my dark valley. "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me."

I think the key word here is walk. I didn't want to pitch a tent—camping out in self-pity, blame, or victimhood—even though I was tempted. I wanted to receive everything the walk itself came to give me. I finally realized I couldn't make the dark circumstances go away, but I could decide how I was going to be in the experience.

Marianne Williamson gave me this idea: Stare down the dark. And I did. I realized the truth of what Jesus said, "Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4). We celebrate Christmas at the darkest time of year, knowing there is a light within us that transcends any darkness. We each have access to something that is more powerful, more transcendent than anything this world can offer. Knowing this truth in concept is not enough. We need to experience it in our own hearts right in the presence of a difficulty that is scary or seems too big for us to handle. Learning to stare down the dark of the problem, we proclaim, "Through the power of God in me, I will master you!"

At this point, we learn for ourselves what Dr. Michael Beckwith means when he says, "Stop telling God about your big problems. Tell your problems about your big God." The presence of God in us is greater than any problem we could encounter.

This Christmas season, let's give ourselves a gift by being who we were created to be: spiritual beings now, just as we were before we took human form and as we will continue to be for all eternity. Allowing the love of God to fill our hearts, we will shine the light of love brightly for all to see.