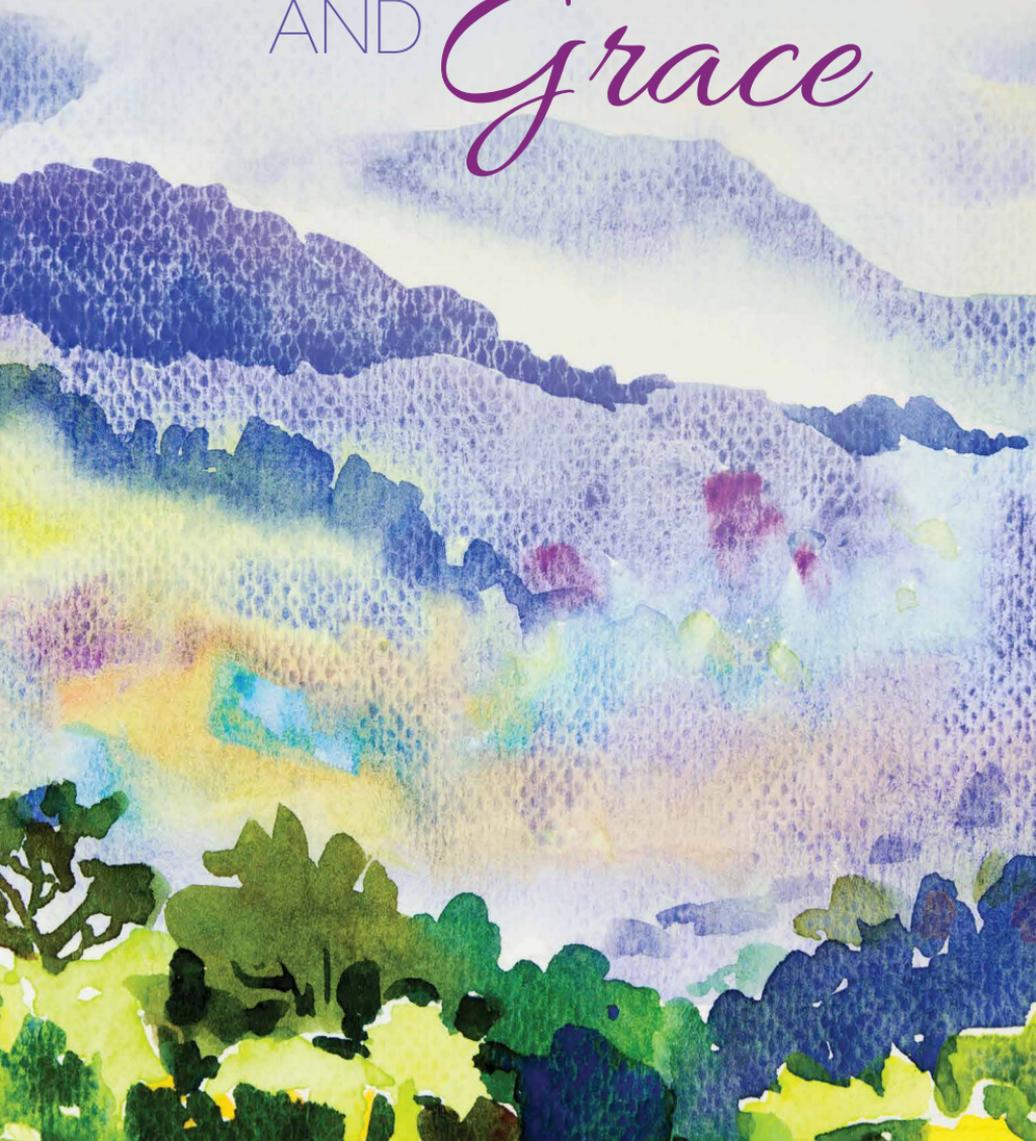


GRATITUDE  
AND *Grace*





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Dear Friend,

It's easy to feel gratitude when the sun is shining and all's right with the world. We can imagine ourselves, perhaps with arms outstretched, basking in the warm grace of God.

But what about those times when life becomes most painful and difficult? There are two important things to remember, and both are good news:

- Gratitude may be the single most powerful spiritual tool we have, no matter the circumstances.
- Grace is always with us.

In *Gratitude and Grace*, your favorite Unity booklet writers share some of their deepest experiences and reflect on the roles of gratitude and grace in times of light and darkness.

As Oprah Winfrey says in her book, *The Wisdom of Sundays*: "I know it's not easy to be grateful all the time, but I've learned that it's when you feel the least thankful that you are most in need of what gratitude can give you: perspective."

Please allow these writers to offer their perspectives as your companions on the human journey.

*Your Friends in Unity*



# The Gift of *Grace*

By Rev. Sandra Campbell

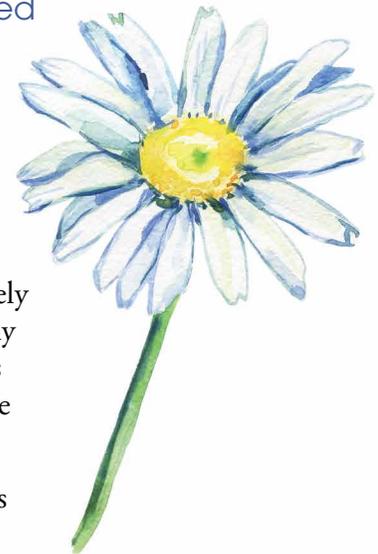


I had a dream one night shortly after the passing of my 2-year-old son that he was standing beside my bed. While Tome was a bright child, he certainly didn't speak in adult sentences. But in this dream he talked as if he were much older. He wanted me to know that he was okay and he was with grace and that I shouldn't worry. Before he faded from my sight, he said I would have another son.

The next day, I couldn't stop wondering what he meant by "I'm with grace." I began to read everything I could find about this thing called *grace*. It is a gift, given freely from God. It is not that I didn't already have it, but Tome raised my awareness of it. That's what children do, when we pay attention.

I knew from then on that my grief was a gift. As it says in Isaiah 11:6, "And a little child shall lead them."

This little boy I carried had been the catalyst for Unity finding me. I was eight months pregnant and crying my eyes out in the restroom at work when an angel came to my rescue and opened my mind to a new





Grace is simply an explanation of a wonderful facet of the activity of God in you. It is not something to work for, to develop.

It simply is.

—Eric Butterworth,  
*Celebrate Yourself!*



way of being. Through her, I met a Unity minister at a Sunday service a few weeks before Tome entered the world—the same minister whose words lifted me up in the eulogy two years later. Tome had drowned in the bathtub on December 1, 1974.

Rev. Mauritz Erhard said at Tome's service, "Don't look at what you have lost; look at what you have left." Those words were so powerful that they carried me through the ups and downs of my grief and shook me awake to care for my daughter Tami, who was 6 at the time.

Then came the dream and Tome's reassurance: "I'm with grace." The dream kept replaying over and over in my mind and gave me the courage to start letting go of what had been and looking forward to what was to be. I decided it was time to go through his things and donate them.

As I was unpacking the dresser drawers, catching a whiff of his baby scent on each piece of clothing, I noticed something familiar that I had long since forgotten. At the bottom

of each drawer, I had neatly spread sheets of wrapping paper from one of the gifts at a surprise baby shower my coworkers had given me. It was so pretty I couldn't bring myself to throw it away. It read: "Monday's child is fair of face; Tuesday's child is full of grace ..."

Tome had been born on a Tuesday. I wondered if he were somehow speaking to me, getting my attention. Then began my search for the meaning of his birth and his short life—beginning with grace.

Grace is a gift. Tome's birth, his life, and his death are the gifts that keep on giving me courage and strength and joy for every day. What I have left is so much greater than I ever could have imagined from this thing we call death. Tome led me to a higher state of mind through grace.

Whenever I hear the words to the song "Amazing Grace," I tear up. I am constantly reminded of the verse that says, "'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

It is this gift of grace that continues to inspire me and fuels my compassion to inspire others to look for the gift of grace in every situation.

Tome's prophecy in the dream came true. A little more than a year later, I did have another son, Phillip Jr.—we call him P.J.—who, like Tami, is now a successful adult and parent to my grandchildren. All of them are gifts of grace.

# The Transformative *Power of Gratitude*

By Rev. Margo Ford



It began with a rainbow on a day when I wasn't sure I could possibly go on. A painful divorce was in the works and I was moving out of my beautiful home. I couldn't imagine how I could manage a life alone. On top of that, I had also just been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Seeing a magnificent rainbow seemed to be a moment of grace in the midst of my seemingly chaotic life, and I whispered a prayer of thanks—just a simple, “Thank you, God.” Quite unexpectedly I felt a little lighter, and a tiny glimmer of hope arose ever so faintly within me.

A few days after the rainbow experience, I became aware of a book by Sarah Ban Breathnach titled *Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy*. That book led me to *The Simple Abundance Journal of Gratitude*. In it, she urged the reader to list five things to be grateful for each day. She said it's even okay to write that you're grateful the day is over, but you still need to write four more things!

I began writing every evening, which meant each day I had to consciously look for what I could write in my gratitude journal. Yes, I was grateful for my vision, my hearing, having a roof over my head, enough food to eat, a good job, my family, and so forth, but I couldn't simply rewrite those things each night. My new practice more or less forced me to become aware of all the wonder



around me: beautiful sunsets, fluffy white clouds, cardinals at my bird feeder, a tiny rabbit scampering across the lawn, and so much more.

One afternoon, the sky was dark to the east while the sun was still shining in the west. As four egrets flew across the darkened sky, the sun glinted off their pure white wings. That vision absolutely took my breath away, and to this day it is among my most cherished memories. I described it in my gratitude journal that evening.

During this same period, as I was preparing for work one morning, I carried my coffee to the car then stopped to run a brief errand. When I returned to the car, the smell of coffee filled the car and filled me with delight. I feel quite certain that in the past, I would not have had such a keen awareness. With great joy I wrote “the aroma of coffee” in my gratitude journal that night.

Keeping a gratitude journal began the process of awakening to the realization that when I took the time to be aware of all the rich blessings constantly surrounding me, I actually felt pretty

good. The longer I continued that practice, the better I felt. And an even more profound awareness occurred—it seemed the longer I practiced conscious gratitude, the more there was in my life for which to be grateful!

Blessedly, my breast cancer required only a lumpectomy and radiation. I was surrounded by supportive family and friends throughout my journey, and I wrote about the experience in my gratitude journal.

Meister Eckhart wrote that if the only prayer we ever say is “Thank you,” it will be enough. I believe that speaking or writing words of gratitude is prayer arising from deep within and connecting us to the presence of God in a most profound way.

I am not only convinced that what we focus our attention on with gratitude increases, but I am absolutely certain the power of gratitude can transform our lives.

It has been found by experience that a person increases his blessings by being grateful for what he has.

—Charles Fillmore,  
*Mysteries of John*



# Grateful for *Nothing*

By Rev. Dr. Paul Hasselbeck

The popular practice of keeping a gratitude journal helps expand and grow gratitude in our consciousness.

Once a day (many people do this at bedtime) sit down and write everything you are grateful for. As you do so, notice your heart, mind, and awareness opening to the vast amount of good in your life.

It is important to note that this practice could lead to the erroneous conclusion that the outer things you are listing—events or persons—actually cause you to feel gratitude. In fact, there is no thing, event, or person that can make you or cause you to think or feel anything.

Each of us has absolute dominion over our own thoughts and feelings. You choose to feel grateful in response to the things you list. There is a correlation between how you feel and your list, but there is not a cause and effect relationship.

The gratitude you feel when writing in a gratitude journal is conditional gratitude because it is based on some external thing, event, or person. Most people have been taught to stop doing that.

However, it can be the first step of a three-step process for learning how to be grateful unconditionally—gratitude without the need for an object or reason.

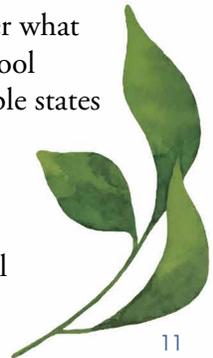
First, list in your journal whatever you're grateful for.

Second, notice how gratitude feels in your mind and body as you journal. Do this for several days.

Third, invest some time generating the feeling of gratitude without the need for a reason. This gratitude is unconditional gratitude. It is not subject to outer things, events, or people.

You can teach yourself to feel gratitude no matter what circumstance you find yourself in. It is a useful tool whenever you feel yourself sliding into undesirable states of unconsciousness such as fear, anger, and guilt.

You can always choose gratitude. You don't have to be grateful for anything. Just be grateful. Or as Paul said, "Rejoice always ... give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:16, 18).



# The Grateful Heart

By Rev. Ric Schumacher

Most of us enjoy receiving a compliment or a gift. And in polite society, when someone gives us a compliment or gift, we say “thank you” for that which we have received.

We have been taught to say “thank you” to express our gratitude for the good things that come our way. We consider that to be appropriate behavior.

How much more appropriate it is to express our gratitude for the gifts of God and for the hope of experiencing new blessings.

If we are seeking any blessing, any new good, any gift of God, the first step is to awaken the gratitude that resides in our hearts. We open our hearts to gratitude by cultivating the seed of gratitude within us. We nurture its growth by lavishing it upon the living water of our spirit. As we let the light of truth shine upon the seed of gratitude, it will blossom and bring forth fruit as surely as the flowers and vegetables do in our summer gardens.

The first fruits of gratitude are comfort and peace. The grateful heart realizes there is no situation or circumstance that is greater than the spirit of God dwelling within our grateful hearts. We experience the gifts of God’s peace and comfort freely and easily when we are grateful.

It is good to remember that everything we need to live a full, happy, and productive life, God has already prepared for us. H. Emilie Cady wrote in *Lessons in Truth*, “Desire in the heart for anything is God’s sure promise sent beforehand to indicate that it is yours already in the limitless realm of supply, and whatever you want you can have for the taking.”

The grateful heart is a faith-filled heart that clearly and consistently envisions the fulfillment of our true desires. It is good to know that, as we deepen our sense of gratitude, nothing can disturb the calm peace of our soul. In this peace, we find the sure realization that, regardless of our individual circumstances, God’s good for us is assured. For this truth we are grateful.

# Gratitude Café and Bakery



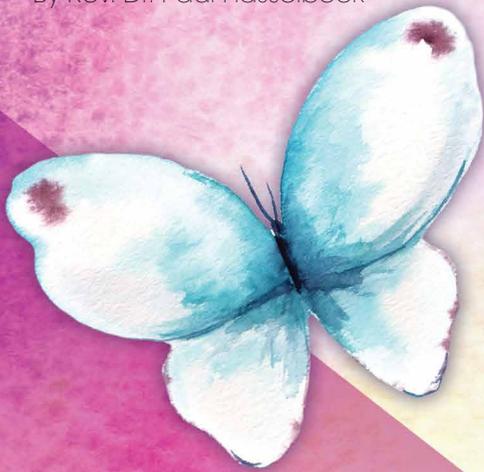
Down the street in a sleepy little town  
I found Gratitude Café,  
A place where “Yes” and “Thank you”  
Turn lives around with a coffee and a cookie  
Like grandma used to make.  
One finds new hope and grace  
Always on the menu of the day.  
Who knew that Gratitude Café  
Is where love is baked with every cake  
And “thank you” is the special of the day?

—Rev. Toni Stephens Coleman

*Written in gratitude to the proprietor of Gratitude Café and Bakery in Lincoln, Nebraska, where our church is currently meeting on Sundays until arrangements can be worked out with our new building.*

# Grace, a Beautiful Way to Live

By Rev. Dr. Paul Hasselbeck



The published writings of Unity cofounder Charles Fillmore contain surprisingly few references to grace—just more than 50. While Fillmore often reinterpreted traditional Christian views, he stuck with a traditional understanding of grace, as evidenced by the following quotes:

“By the grace of God through Christ Jesus I am made whole.”—Charles Fillmore, *Jesus Christ Heals*

“Grace means goodwill, favor, disposition to show mercy. Therefore, we do not hold ourselves as bond servants of the law, but as recipients of the grace of God, as sons of the Most High.”—Charles Fillmore, *Keep a True Lent*

“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”—Charles Fillmore, *Mysteries of John*

Like Fillmore, I long believed grace was the free and unmerited favor of God. In other words, God did not punish us as much as He might have for our sins and errors.

At the same time, Fillmore taught about the law of cause and effect, which is summed up by this scripture:





“You reap whatever you sow” (Galatians 6:7). As a student of Unity teachings, I learned we sometimes do not entirely reap the negative effects of what has been sown because of a higher law or principle of love.

Whether it is God stepping in to save us from our error thinking or the operation of a higher law, there is another way to look at grace.

A few months ago, while I was enjoying a cup of coffee at my favorite Starbucks, two men sat at the next table. As I overheard their conversation, I realized they were both ministers. I must admit to leaning a bit closer to better hear them.

The older of the two was clearly mentoring the younger one. The older minister asked the younger one how his parents had treated him when he was out of line or sinned. Without missing a beat, a broad smile spread across the younger man’s face. “No matter what, my parents always offered me grace.”

*What?* I thought to myself. *I sure wish my parents had done that with me.*

I had never really considered grace in this way. It was always for the exclusive use of God. Could we be the ones who offer grace to each other?

As I thought more deeply into this concept, my mind opened. This makes so much sense in the context of another teaching found in Unity. Charles Fillmore believed God is principle:

“The truth is, then: That God is principle, law ...”  
—Charles Fillmore, *Christian Healing*

In *The Revealing Word*, Charles Fillmore states this:

“All-Good—Divine mind; God; the principle of divine benevolence that permeates the universe.”  
—Found alphabetically under “All-Good”

What if grace is one way we use the principle of benevolence? We could say God is the principle that contains principles, and the principle of benevolence is one of them. Since we are divine, then the principle of benevolence is at the core of our beingness. One way we use it is to offer grace to others and ourselves.

Instead of punishment or retribution for a perceived slight or wrong, we offer grace. When another errs or makes a mistake, instead of condemnation or punishment, we grant grace.

What a beautiful way to live!



# Grit, Grace, and Gratitude

By Rev. Kelly Isola



Oftentimes when I have a question about what Myrtle Fillmore thought on a particular topic, I end up in a deep dive with her published and unpublished works. I erroneously think the answers will be laid out in a linear fashion—just open a digital document and do a search for *gratitude* or *thanksgiving*—and I should get a multitude of matches.

Nothing could be further from reality. In the end I am left with a treasure trove of unexpected gems and surprises, and this time was no different.

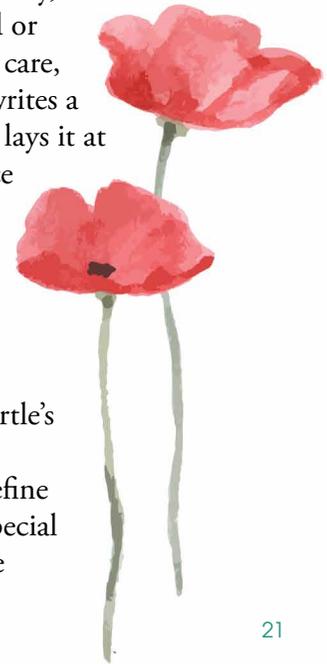
Myrtle, who cofounded Unity with her husband Charles in 1889, rarely spoke in public; that

was Charles' bailiwick. However, she wrote quite a bit: lessons, articles, poems, hymns, and we are familiar with many of the letters she penned in response to prayer requests.

In my deep dive this time, I discovered something fascinating about the rhythm of her replies to prayer requests: Each one shared three common elements of grit, grace, and gratitude.

The grit is the heart of someone's prayer request, the life challenge a person is facing. All matters of suffering we face today were alive 120 years ago in some fashion: difficult pregnancies, alcoholism, destitution, unemployment, poverty, women's rights, death, illness (some life-threatening, some not), sexuality, mental illness, children being neglected or hurt, environment, education, medical care, and so much more. Each person who writes a letter brings the grit of their world and lays it at the altar of prayer, the altar of life. Since the beginning of humanity we have recognized altars as sacred places to gather, places that remind us we can't undertake this journey alone.

When she composed her thoughts and words of prayer, what emerged was Myrtle's grace. *Grace* can be a tough word to explain. More often than not people define it as unmerited divine assistance or a special favor from God, but I don't think grace



is ever about worthiness. While Myrtle rarely uses the word *grace*, I see grace as the energy of life in her healing words. To Myrtle, grace becomes simply another word for God.

The origin of the word *grace* means “to rejoice,” to acknowledge the unnamable “sweetness” we experience when the grit has been stripped away and released. Think of a ballet dancer: The movements are graceful and supple because we are watching the refined expression of the body as a result of practice and release, practice and release. We ultimately witness the awe and wonder of the dancer rejoicing in the body—the sweetness of life energy.

Like the dancer, grace is the simple elegance and suppleness present in our words and actions. It is the space where we have accepted another in all their glory and all their down-darkness as they search for a place to land. When we practice being fully present to another, grace appears as vitality bursting into being, so that we might be brought further into the mystery of living. This, I believe, Myrtle demonstrates with every prayer offered.

From this place of grace Myrtle’s prayer then moves into the energy of trusting life, trusting principle, and finally culminates in praising the divinity and wholeness of all things, including the person who originally wrote asking for prayer. *This is gratitude for Myrtle.*



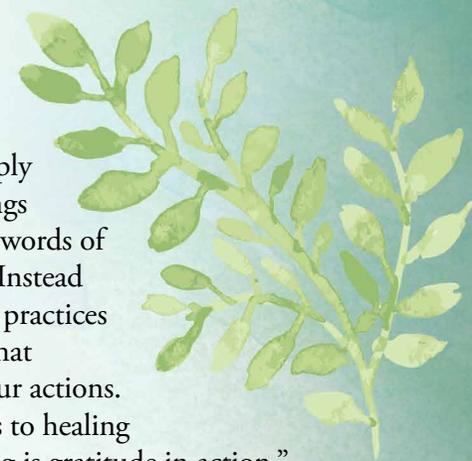
What I’ve noticed and deeply appreciate about her writings is how she rarely uses only words of thanksgiving or gratitude. Instead she goes a step further and practices praise. She makes it clear that gratitude is most alive in our actions. She says the “soul responds to healing through praise, and praising is gratitude in action.”

She wrote to one correspondent, for example: “Your first duty, then, is to bless your body. Get your thoughts right down into it and praise its wonderful work.”

And she told another: “Look at that wonderful body temple. It is precious to you. Begin to see that body as the instrument of the soul, which enables you to carry out God’s plans in the earth.”

We may have grown tarnished by life experiences, yet Myrtle demonstrates time and time again our wholeness is experienced when we are worn back by the grit of life to the incorruptible spot of grace, God. She shows us over and over that the practice of grateful living is trust in life, and she reminds us always that each day we make the choice to trust or not.

Just as the rhythm of the prayer requests and her healing letters comes though as grit, grace, and gratitude, embedded within all of it is her steadfast belief and commitment to that invitation to trust. Through that trust we experience perfect health of body, sweet peace of mind, and knowledge of truth.



# Grace, Even When God Seems Absent

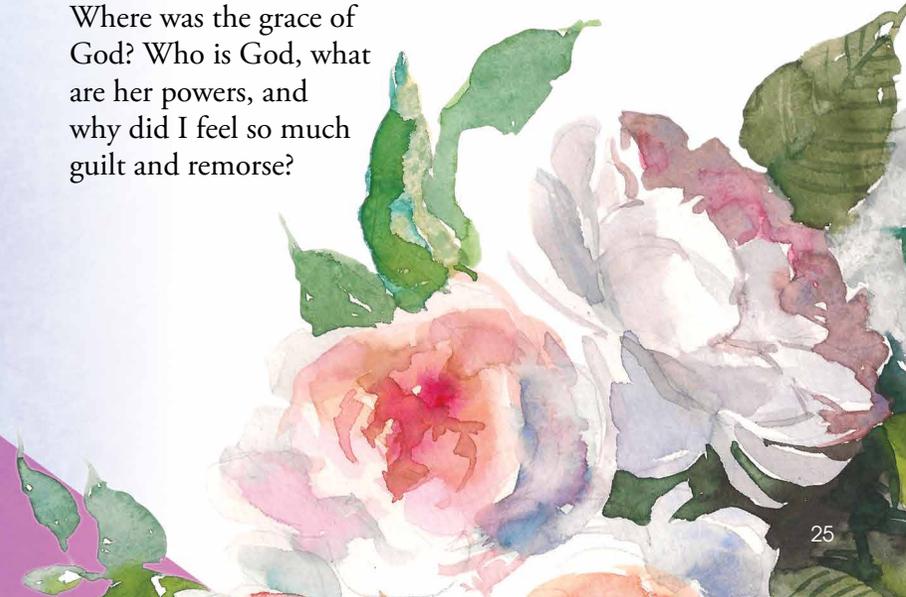
By Rev. John Beerman



It was a rather typical Sunday afternoon in December. I was preparing for the week when I received a call that would alter my life forever. My dear daughter had taken her life in an incident that was frankly unfathomable.

I could scarcely breathe, and my body began to respond with such heaviness and woe that I was left feeling hopeless and without any energy. I could not understand how this could happen or why God had left her presence for a split second for this to occur.

In the days after her suicide, I spoke with other grieving parents and learned that I was not alone. This didn't relieve the pain because I had thought she would get better and recover from her mental illness and that God was going to see her and me through this difficult time. Where was the grace of God? Who is God, what are her powers, and why did I feel so much guilt and remorse?



Working with a professional grief counselor, I slowly began to understand it was not my fault, that my daughter's mental illness was the primary cause. But still, where was God's grace? Why didn't she get help and get better? She believed in God and could even help others in their struggles. Damn this graceless God who left her in her most pressing time of need and left me alone and bewildered.

Out of desperation, I began to try to communicate with my daughter, first by writing letters to her and then in a one-way conversation. Eventually, I sensed we had made contact, and I began to know she was with me in spirit. An inkling of God's grace seeped into my soul.

Next, I revisited an old friend who had lost his daughter. His words of kindness and love showered me with comfort. He assured me she was in a good place, a place

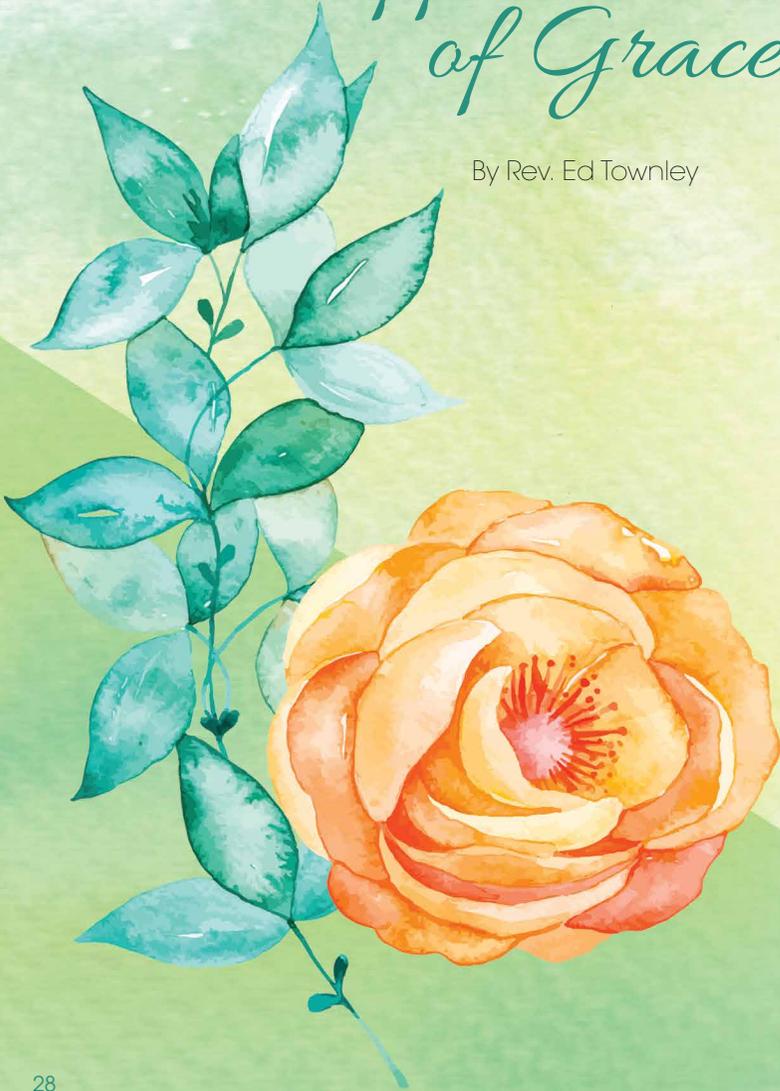
of warmth, safety, and unconditional love. There was God's grace in this tragedy after all. She is at peace and in harmony with all of universal consciousness.

I didn't understand then that grace is not a free pass from Spirit, allowing us to escape pain and heartache. It is a deeper understanding that the foundation of the universe is spiritual and that everything has a purpose, an ultimate promise. That promise is: God doesn't cause pain, but God will see us through it. God's grace will see us through the darkest nights and the most difficult times in our lives.

There is hope for a brighter tomorrow when the grace of God lives in us, as us—when we know that God doesn't leave us, even for a moment. God's grace cradles us in loving arms, especially in times of unbearable pain and grief.

# What's the *Opposite of Grace?*

By Rev. Ed Townley



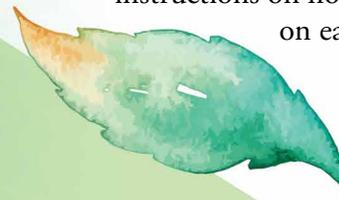
I've been told of a man who invented the ultimate solvent. It would dissolve absolutely anything. He expected to get rich from his discovery but he couldn't find anything to put it in.

Grace is a little like that. It's impossible to contain within the limits of language. What is grace? How do we describe its amorphous spiritual quality? We know what we mean, but we can't always speak it out.

When defining a word, sometimes it can be helpful to ask what its opposite might be. I think the opposite of grace is effort.

We expend great energy early in life working to master the challenges of being human. We study, we work, we accumulate experiences; it takes a lot of effort, but it's how life is lived. Or so we've come to believe.

At some point, perhaps, we begin to chafe under the demands of being human. Why is it so difficult? Searching for answers takes us into an expanded awareness of ourselves as something more than our mortal experience. We seek for—and find—confirmation of ourselves as beings of Spirit and instructions on how to live in spiritual consciousness on earth.





And, again, it seems to take a lot of effort. All those books, workshops, projects, services! Not to mention the constant vigilance required to keep from slipping back into limited human consciousness. It's exhausting!

Can this be how it works? Do fleeting moments of spiritual peace in our human experience really require the strain of making consistent right choices and the pressure of maintaining a spiritual consciousness?

This is where we find grace, the opposite of effort. It's the unearned, unexpected, eternal energy that supports and embraces us once we release our attempts to do everything within the confines of our mortal mind.

Grace makes everything more effortless—the challenges, the joys, the chaos and confusion. But first it has to be accepted. We may be so caught up in working through challenges at the mortal level that we fail to notice the availability of grace to dissolve resistance.

Without grace, our lives can require a tremendous amount of effort to move forward within the markers of a narrow path. Once open to grace, our possibilities expand infinitely. We can use grace to move us—easily and, well, gracefully—to the innate presence of divine mind.



And grace flows in both directions! We can move with equal ease from the perspective of Spirit back to a new appreciation of our human lives. Choices that proved to be ineffective can be gently dissolved and made again.

By its very nature grace does not have to be earned and is never denied. It flows whenever we remember to take the time to step back from the challenge at

hand and allow grace to express. Theologian Richard Rohr writes that, when God gives of God self, one of two things happens: Either flesh is inspired or spirit is enfleshed. Both directions are important; each needs the other if we are to achieve our creative spiritual purpose.



And grace is so simple! All it asks of us is to remember to relax, to move easily to our spiritual perspective, and then return to the challenge refreshed and empowered.

So our initial question needs to be rephrased. Grace is not a *what* but a *how*.

# The Protection of *Grace*

By Rev. Joan Gattuso

When I was new to metaphysics, I held the mistaken belief that if one fully practiced spiritual principles, that person had the key to unlock the answer to all of life's challenges. No problem would be insurmountable. I would easily handle them all.

How wrong I was.

Years later, having lived through cancer, vascular and cardiac issues, marital abuse, and career upsets, I have learned that no one is free from life's challenges.

This being understood, one evening in early February of this year I was standing in the bathroom taking off my yoga pants, which are very tight at the ankles. Using the toes of one foot, I attempted to run my foot down the leg of the snug pants to slip them off. Somehow my foot got tangled, I lost my balance, and all 5' 8" of me went down like a plank.

I hit the bathroom tile face down and landed on my forehead. Dazed, I called for my husband David who had heard the thud and was already on his way to me. He coached me to attempt to stand by grasping the edge of the bathtub. I was able to stand, but I was reeling from the blow to my head.

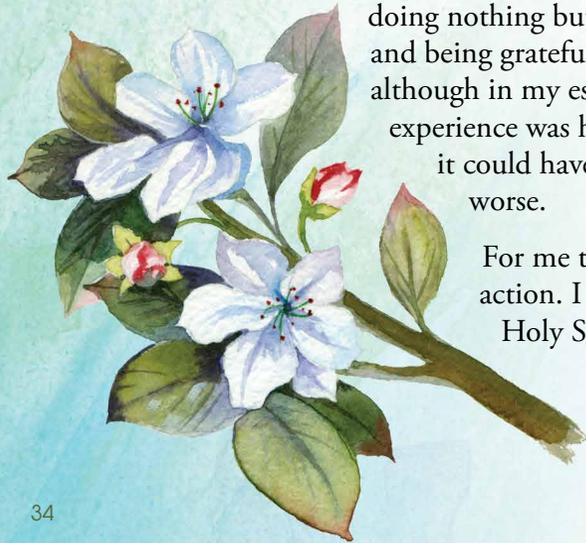
I had a black and blue egg on my forehead. When I was examined at the emergency room, I was told the good and the bad news:

1. I didn't have a brain bleed. Good.
2. I had a severe concussion. Bad.
3. I didn't break any teeth. Good.
4. I didn't break my nose. Good.

Even through the nearly debilitating headaches and extreme dizziness, I could see how protected I was. It has taken several months to recover—months I spent

doing nothing but being quiet and being grateful. I saw that, although in my estimation the experience was horrendous, it could have been much worse.

For me this is grace in action. I could see the Holy Spirit working



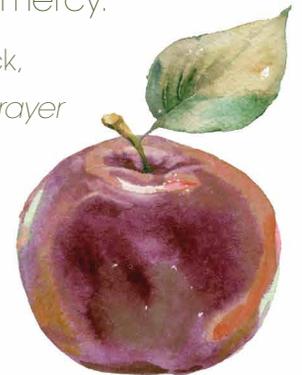
with me through every step. Grace protected me from a dire outcome. Grace is protection.

As spiritual practitioners, it does not mean we never have to face life's greatest challenges. It does mean we can always rely on Spirit within to protect us.

“God is my help in every need,” begins an old Unity prayer. By accepting grace into our lives, we become transformed. We learn to expect and accept protection from the Holy Spirit, our help in every need. Then we can overcome any of the difficulties that may come our way.

Grace is not a special activity of God reserved only for human emergencies. It is omnipresent. As the principle which governs the cosmic process and as the cosmic process itself, God is always pouring out love and mercy.

—Hypatia Hasbrouck,  
*Handbook of Positive Prayer*



# God's Grace Has a *Human Face*

By Rev. Ric Schumacher

Grace as a theological concept can be difficult to understand. Grace has been defined as God's love continually being poured out upon those who are open to receiving it. That's easy to understand but it isn't very warm.

I have experienced the warmth of God's love many times, most powerfully when that love was expressed by another human being. I take great comfort in the realization that God's grace has a human face.

In my lifetime, I have known two incredible women, both of whom were named Grace.

Grace Z. was an Italian woman with five children. Two of her children are my age—we grew up together. Grace was an incredible cook—handmade pasta and sauce that simmered all day long. She poured her love into everything she did. With five children, there were always a couple of extra kids at the dinner table, and Grace always welcomed them graciously.

I was one of the extra kids. I was there at her table often. I felt the love of God poured out of Grace's kitchen; the grace of God was poured out upon her open and receptive mind and heart, and she received it. The love of God filled her like the psalmist's cup to overflowing.

Through her hands and her pasta and sauce, we tasted the grace of God. I could see the love of God in her radiant face and, just before the meal was served, I could hear the love being poured upon me as we said grace. Yes, God's grace has a human face.

Grace W. is a knitter at my previous church. She came to me while I was minister there to ask whether we might begin a prayer shawl ministry. I responded by saying, "Let's see who might be interested." We began with 12 and soon there were 25 knitters making prayer shawls. With each twist and turn of the yarn, with every click of the knitting needles, Grace and her band of knitters poured the love of God into every fiber of those prayer shawls.

One Sunday morning, a mother came to church with the sad news that her son had been killed in an accident. Grace assembled a handful of knitters, grabbed a shawl and wrapped it around the grieving mother's shoulders, and together they prayed. Later, I was told the prayer shawl provided such great comfort to the bereaved woman that she wore it for three days, even sleeping with it. Yes, God's grace has a human face.

Grace then is the love of God poured out upon us that fills us to overflowing so that we can in turn pour it out upon others. This is grace beyond the theological concepts. This is grace that warms the heart and heals every concern. This is grace we can taste, see, and hear. This is grace that wraps itself around us and comforts us in difficult times.

This is the grace of God, and it is the face of God. It is your face and my face too.

Gratitude opens our consciousness to receive more. A supply of good is always available, for God is omnipresent.

—Elizabeth Sand Turner, *Your Hope of Glory*



# The Most Versatile *Tool in the Box*

By Rev. Richard Mekdeci

When my Aunt Julia suffered a heart attack, my father rode in the ambulance with her. He said later she was breathing heavily and kept saying, "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus," over and over again until they arrived at the hospital.

I didn't know what to make of that as a child, but now through my "Unity eyes" I can see that Aunt Julia was comforting herself. She survived the attack, although she died later that year.

There is a tremendous reason why the apostle Paul suggested we give thanks in all things and why Meister Eckhart wrote that gratitude alone can be your one and only prayer.

Gratitude is a magic wand of sorts—the most versatile tool in my spiritual toolbox. The spell of gratitude elevates almost every situation and helps fill almost every need I have.

When I am grieving, giving thanks for the thing or person that was lost helps me move through the grief.

If I'm having difficulty letting go of something that no longer serves me, giving thanks for that person or thing helps me release them.

If I am finding it difficult to forgive someone, I bless them and give thanks for them in my life. Then forgiveness comes more easily.

If I need more money, I bless the money I have by giving thanks, and in so doing, I change my thoughts from lack to unlimited possibility.

By giving thanks in advance for that which I desire, I strengthen my faith and increase my expectation of grace coming to me.

When I am ill, I give thanks for the life and health that energizes each cell in my body, and the dis-ease is transformed.

When I am fearful, giving thanks activates my inner strength and wisdom, allowing me to choose to act from my highest state of mind.

There is no need to thank anyone or anything. Just give thanks. Whatever your trouble, try waving the magic wand of gratitude over your situation and experience the spiritual power that stands under all spiritual power.

# The Many Ways to Practice Gratitude

By Rev. Elizabeth Longo

Consciously practicing gratitude has radically transformed my life.

I began this simple but powerful practice more than 20 years ago. It has helped me shift from worry and fear to hope and love. When I am in the space of being grateful, my heart is open, my mind is clear, and I can begin to see possibilities where before I couldn't.



I make room for grace. I remind myself that the goodness of God is always present and that there is a blessing in every situation, even if I am not able to see it in the moment.



I focus on the good and I know that what I focus on expands. Appreciating and being grateful for even the tiniest thing shifts my energy and opens my heart to love and the life that is present in the moment.



I begin each day with a "thank you." It helps me set the tone for the day. I keep a gratitude journal to remind me of the miraculous abundance of life. As I am falling asleep, I give thanks for all the blessings of the day.



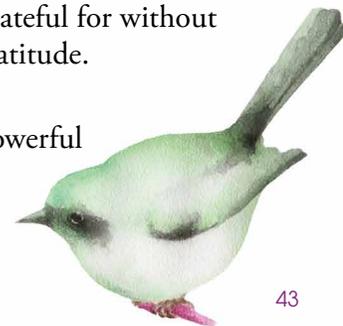
When my energy feels low, when I am stressed, when I am confused, I take a moment to notice what is right in front of me. I can appreciate and be grateful for that, and life begins to reveal its wonder and beauty. In an instant, I feel renewed and lifted.



Taking gratitude walks on the beach or in a park with my prayer partner expands my consciousness and elevates my spirit to new heights, in ever-expanding love. We take turns speaking out loud what we are grateful for without much thought—just playful, joyous gratitude.



This is probably my most profound, powerful practice. After a few turns I feel connected with all of existence, in the zone and grounded, while totally free like the wind.





# Finding Gratitude and Grace *in Grief*

By Rev. Ogun Holder

“Nothing is certain except for death and taxes.” Benjamin Franklin is usually given credit for the saying. Sometimes it’s attributed to Mark Twain.

It was actually the author Christopher Bullock who first wrote it in *The Cobbler of Preston* (1716). But there is another certainty he neglected to mention: loss. We all experience loss to varying degrees, and as a result, we also experience its companion: grief.

We might assume that the extent and intensity of our grief experience relates directly to the relevance of our loss, but that isn’t always the case. It’s also not the case that we express grief in the same ways.

Physical expressions of grief include crying, headaches, loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, fatigue, feelings of heaviness, aches, pains, and other stress-related ailments. Emotional expressions of grief include feelings of sadness and yearning, worry, anxiety, frustration, anger, and guilt. Social expressions of grief include feeling detached from others, isolating from social contact, and behaving in uncharacteristic ways.

Grief is also experienced spiritually and includes questioning the reason for your loss, the purpose of pain and suffering, the purpose of life, the meaning of death, and beliefs in God and the afterlife.

Depending on your information source, there are various amounts and differing stages of grief (for example: shock, denial, bargaining, guilt, anger, depression, and acceptance). These stages can appear randomly and repeatedly for unpredictable periods of time. In other words, grief has no schedule or pattern, and it takes so much out of us.

Eventually, if we let it, grief can also be a bearer of gifts.

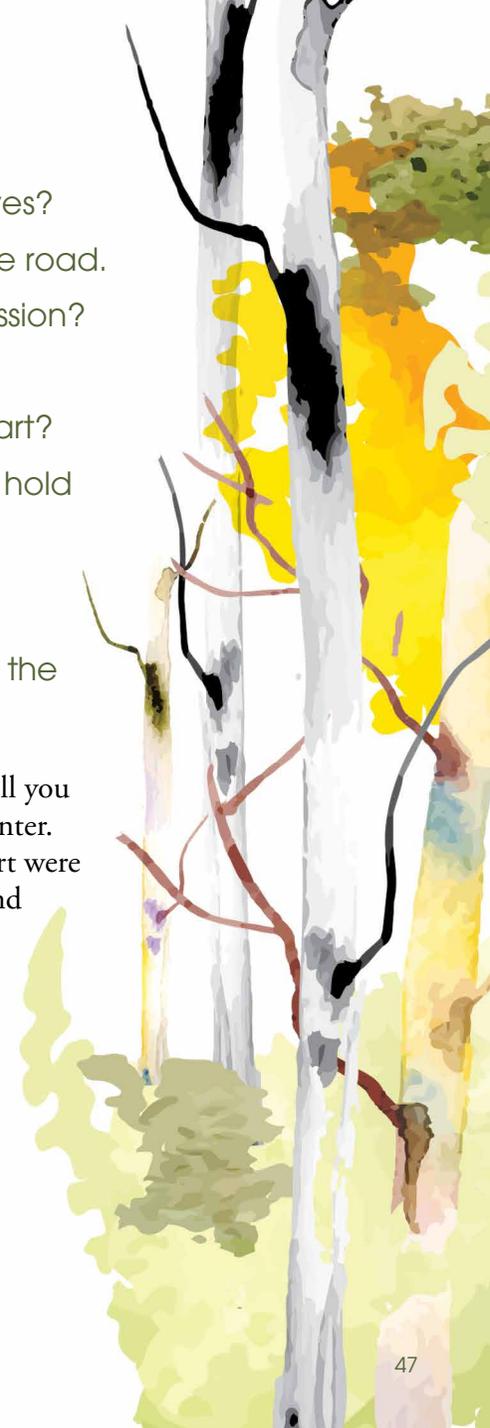
In the summer of 2015, I lost Jennifer, my wife of 16 years, to colon cancer. Since then I have experienced all the symptoms previously mentioned and then some. I also experienced a heart cracked wide open. Many of us are familiar with the Rumi quote, "The wound is the place where the light enters you." Fewer of us, however, might have read the entire poem:

"I said: what about my eyes?  
He said: Keep them on the road.  
I said: What about my passion?  
He said: Keep it burning.  
I said: What about my heart?  
He said: Tell me what you hold  
inside it.  
I said: Pain and sorrow.  
He said: Stay with it. The  
wound is the place where the  
light enters you."

From my own experience, I can tell you that it takes time for the light to enter. For a while it seemed as if my heart were indelibly broken, not fractured, and all I felt was pain and sorrow.

Then ever so slowly, without my even realizing it, the light did indeed begin to creep in, like dim rays around the edges of the blackout curtains in my bedroom.

As I wallowed in the long list of what I had lost with Jennifer's



passing, I found myself being thankful for the same things on that list.

I lost someone who walked beside me through good times and bad, and I could be grateful for the fun-filled moments that brought smiles and laughter, as well as the tough times that deepened our bond and helped elevate me to higher versions of myself.

I lost the mother of my child, and I give thanks every day for the amazing daughter we raised together who would make any mother proud, especially her own.

I lost a partner in ministry, and thankfully I am the minister I am now because of how we supported and challenged each other professionally.

I lost a lover, and through loving her, I learned to love myself.

By allowing myself to feel gratitude amidst the chaotic swells of grief, I find myself today in a state of grace I didn't (and couldn't) imagine three years ago. I experience the fullness of life with a deeper appreciation and sense of abundance as never before. I take nothing for granted.

My grief journey continues, and it continues to transform me. It is not an adversary to be avoided but an ally to be embraced. My cracked-open heart remains exposed and vulnerable, light streaming in both directions.

You see, those cracks don't only let the light in. They also let the love shine out.

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