

# Self-Empowerment

Spring 2014

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

Vol. 21, Number 3

A publication of  Agape Interfaith Ministries

## The Rebirth Paradox

Happy Spring 2014! We are reborn, again and again. Spring is a great metaphor for the rebirth each of us may experience in any moment, or as a process over time.

Yet there is a paradox. Any rebirth, or shift in consciousness, contains a thread of continuity that remains in the fabric of who we think we are.

With each rebirth I experience, it is still “me” having a changed perception of the world around me and the potential to respond in a new way.

### No new me vs Know new me

Each of us has had a number of experiences that can be described in purely sensory terms. For example, as I was exiting a parking lot, I saw and felt my car swerve to the right and ride over a metal object that ripped the front right tire. These are the things I observed. I am aware that in the past I probably would have reacted with anger, fear, and sadness – worrying about the cost of the repair, etc. This time, however, I responded with clarity and peace. I called AAA to get the immediate tire-changing help I needed, and then proceeded to handle the next steps of car repair, new tire purchase, and contact with my insurance company with openhearted equanimity. I am convinced that my investment in spiritual practice and psychological work has paid off in this new internal experience. The peace, poise, and power that I experienced in the midst of the flat tire circumstance was feedback that helped me see a valuable change in “me”.

But there is no “new” person who has taken the place of the “old” one. It’s still “me” with a shift in awareness. That is what this Self-empowerment work is all about. It is the cultivation of deepening levels of integration of *essence qualities* into our daily lives.

How we meet the challenges of life gives us important information that can be the catalyst for growth and change.

### Cancer Treatment

The summer of 2013 launched me into a journey of cancer treatment. I chose a medical team and submitted to surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. I relaxed into an unfamiliar position of needing and receiving help and support. There were periodic times of sickness, weakness, and discomfort. There were also times of relative pain-free functionality. I lost my hair. I witnessed

many other men and women hooked up to the chemotherapy IV’s in the room with me, each having their own private internal experience of facing illness and potential recovery.

What were my thoughts, feelings, and judgments of my various experiences as a cancer patient? What was revealed to me of my identity?

Sometimes it was in contrast with another that I recognized myself. One day in the chemo room I witnessed a patient hitting one of the nurses. Although the two of them joked and bantered about hurting each other, I interpreted that patient’s behavior as anger at having to endure the treatments. My own experience of the chemo treatments was one of great gratitude. I was grateful for the science that makes such treatments so effective in its stated purpose. I was grateful for the professionalism and kindness of the nurses within the sea of huge numbers of newly diagnosed cancer patients. I was grateful for my best friend driving me and staying with me through each and every treatment. I continue to feel and express my gratitude for opportunities that reveal my love of life.

I recognize that while I am not in control of many circumstances, there is a power greater than me that is the source of peace, inspiration, clarity, and many other qualities that can be accessed and embodied to face those circumstances with grace. No matter what you call that power, willingness to receive grace is the essence of faith. I have faith in the perfect unfolding of purpose in our lives. My willingness to use each circumstance as an opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute to others makes any circumstance not only bearable, but a gift for which to be grateful. In all things endeavor to give thanks.

*We find peace not by rearranging the circumstances of our lives, but by realizing who we are at the deepest level.*

~ Eckhart Tolle

So am I grateful for the cancer treatment journey? Yes, I am! Despite the uncomfortable parts, or maybe because of them, I have plumbed new depths of myself, expanded in compassion, and have relished this as an opportunity to re-boot for a fresh start to making new choices.

I am blessed to be able to share my insights and inspiration with you.

*(continued on page 2)*

## Body Love

Some years ago I published an article called “Body Love” by Allyson Joyner. Parts of the article came to mind after my surgery and during the 16 weeks of chemo treatments. As I faced some changes in my body and various side effects, I was reminded to be gentle and compassionate towards my “imperfect” body. I heartily recommend that as a perfect prescription for all time, not just for extraordinary circumstances.

I believe that my body is a communication device between our souls. I would like my body to be well cared for, so it can be an instrument of conveying the gifts my life is here to express.

I want to pay attention to its needs for an appropriate diet of nutritious and delicious foods, a reasonable amount of exercise, acceptance of its unique configuration, and appropriate attention to its various conditions. If well cared for, my body should be able to help me be the best me I can be.

## Presence

The word *presence* has several meanings. One meaning is concerned with a state of being present in the here and now. Another meaning has to do with another person in attendance, as in my feeling your presence with me. Well, I have had a heaping helping of both forms of presence!

In terms of being in the here and now, it felt like a crash course in staying present with myself, my feelings, and my needs. In the past I have tended to make plans for the future, putting those plans on my calendar. However, in light of my medical treatment plan, I experienced a hesitance to plan much, allowing for whatever might naturally unfold and fit in with my needs and abilities of the moment.

As for feeling the presence of others, I certainly have not felt alone. I have sensed the presence of earthly and unearthly angels with me throughout my time of recovery. Many friends and relatives have been a great support to me in care and prayer. I feel their presence with me, lifting me and supporting my well-being. I feel the presence and power of Divine Life filling my mind, heart, and body with renewal. I feel the presence of mighty companions. For that I am eternally grateful!

*The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers. ~Thich Nhat Hanh*

May each of us value that connection with the deepest level of our being that leads to peace and blessings in whatever life circumstances we meet.

Your fellow traveler,

*Rev. Jill*

# A Prayer

by Lee Ann P. Etscovitz

This is a prayer  
to the Unseen Powers  
that move over and above us,  
through and amidst us.

Grant us the strength  
to see in our struggles  
the emergence  
of a special wisdom,

a wisdom  
born of pain and suffering,  
of risk and trust,  
of courage and persistence,  
of caring and reaching out,

a wisdom  
that yields a deeper knowledge  
of who we are  
in all our manifestations,

a wisdom that helps us handle  
the forces of darkness  
that sharpen our view of  
Reality.

Let us reach down  
into the depths of our souls  
to do the soul work  
our lives demand of us,

that we may learn in our lifetime  
the meaning of existence,  
individually  
and communally.

And let us remember  
that the journey  
into the fullness of life  
begins with every sunrise,

with every awakening of the soul,  
and with every step into the  
Unknown.

From the book *Let the Dandelions Grow: A Poetic Portrait of a Transsexual Journey and the Human Condition* by Lee Ann P. Etscovitz. © 2012



# The Gift of Gratitude

by Cynthia Greb

I read today that when we are chronically dissatisfied and sink into a morass of misery, we become like a toxin, poisoning not only our own bodies and those around us, but the world itself. By contrast, Gratitude is a blessing. When you practice Gratitude, you are offering a great gift not only to yourself, but to those around you, and even to the world.

So I'm going to play the Gratitude Game again. For ten minutes, I'm going to type all those things I am grateful for at this moment in time. (And I know ten minutes will not be enough time.) Ready, set, go!

I am grateful to have friends who feel like family. And I'm grateful to have grown up in a functional and loving family. I'm grateful for my parents and I'm grateful for my siblings. I'm grateful for the staff at the nursing home who are taking good care of Dad. I'm grateful for the caregivers who are assisting Mom.

I'm grateful for the meal I had tonight and my friends who cooked it. I am grateful for this warm house, for a bed to sleep in, for a hot shower and an indoor toilet. I am grateful for electricity and stoves and refrigerators and sinks. I am grateful to have a car and I'm really grateful to the friends who have lent me theirs while I am visiting my parents for a while.

I am grateful to the dogs and cats who live with my friends. I am grateful for the love these animals so readily show us flawed humans. I am grateful for people who work hard to rescue animals. I am grateful to animals in the wild – to wolves and whales and wombats; to bats, butterflies, and birds; to cats, coyotes, and coatimundis; to all animals.

I am grateful to trees and to flowers and to grasses and herbs and mosses. I am grateful to pumpkins and pears, walnuts and pine nuts, apples and avocados, basil and tarragon and thyme. I am grateful for real honest-to-goodness food. I am grateful to the farmers who grow food. I am grateful for farmers markets and food co-ops.

I am grateful for the beauty of the Earth – for oceans and rivers and seas, for forests and desert and tundra, for grasslands and mountains and wetlands. I am grateful for water. For aquifers and springs and rain and snow. I am grateful for the sun and moon and stars. I am grateful for clouds and rainbows and thunderstorms. I am grateful for seasons and I'm grateful for weather. I'm grateful for fresh air and wind and gentle breezes. I'm grateful for tides and waves and waterfalls.

I'm grateful for books and music, for language and touch. I'm grateful for hugs and kisses, massages and tickles, smiles and lovemaking. I'm grateful for dancing and walking and running. I'm grateful for bending and stretching. I'm grateful for this body.

And my time is up.

There is so much to be grateful for. May I never forget. May I never take anything in my life for granted.

Blessed be.

*Cynthia Greb is a writer, artist, and interfaith minister currently residing in beautiful Crestone, Colorado. You can read her inspirational blog at*

*<http://www.beliefnet.com/columnists/blessingsabound>*

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## The Bridge Between Worlds

by Dan Millman

Moment to moment, our awareness resides either in a conventional or transcendental world or reality. For example, from a conventional view, illness is a misfortune; we are separate beings; and death is final. From a transcendental perspective, illness (or any adversity) offers hidden gifts; we are all one in consciousness; and death is an illusion.

Conventional reality usually monopolizes our attention with the stuff of everyday life. We pursue satisfaction and fulfillment, and happiness depends on our desires, hopes, and expectations being met. In the process, we sometimes suffer from attachment, craving, and anxiety.

Then one day, we notice something important: We are suffering. Our pain may take the form of an acute illness, injury, or personal loss. If we are suffering from a lack of money, making more money alleviates the pain; if we are physically ill, getting healthy solves this issue. Every problem seems to have an obvious, although temporary, solution.

It is only when we are willing to question what we have always believed and venture into the unknown that we can finally free ourselves from this endless search for quick fixes.

When we realize we are the source and cause of our situation and pain, we reach a turning point: We become interested not just in self-improvement, but in self-transcendence. We take a leap of faith to discover a new way of thinking and being. We may search for a teacher, school, process, or path to awakening.

The world's spiritual traditions all point to a transcendent reality beyond our usual state of consciousness, beyond our everyday stories and assumptions, beyond the boundaries of our common beliefs. Its truths are not found in formulas, visions, or

mystical experiences, but in a simple yet profound shift in perspective – a shift that reveals the great simplicity of What Is.

The Transcendent is not elsewhere. *Freedom is possible right here, right now* – as close as our next breath, as intimate as our heartbeat. Awakening does not require us to abandon the conventional world, but rather, to keep our head in the clouds for a higher view and our feet on solid ground.

As we live in this higher truth, we rise above the conventional world even as we function in it. We realize we are already free and perfect. Nothing is needed to complete or fulfill us; we are already Home, here and now. No separation exists – no others, no world, no time, no space – just this mysterious and blissful moment.

When we grasp this Great Simplicity, the realization does not make us famous, successful, wealthy, or even holy. Nor does it release us from the obligation to raise our children, go to work, and live our lives. It simply brings us peace, gives us joy, and sets us free.

But like children on a school-day morning, we may want to turn off the alarm, put a pillow over our head at the first wake-up call, and say, “Please let me sleep just a little longer!” We may want to wake up, but find ourselves instead pursuing success within the dream.

Fortunately, Reality waits with infinite patience. We don’t need spiritual healing; we need to realize we were never sick in the way we imagined, that our “sickness” was itself a story we believed and so experienced as true. The transcendent perspective reveals that no matter what the apparent challenge, our lives are always unfolding in divine order and perfection. The journey may not always be pleasant, but it serves our highest good and our soul’s evolution.

The bridge between worlds is available here and now, in front of us, around us, inside us. To find it, we need only trust our own true nature, and notice the perfection of our lives unfolding. When we open our eyes, we find within us the truth that sets us free.

In my book, *The Laws of Spirit*, the woman sage expresses it this way:

“These are my wishes and prayers for you, all the days of your life. May you find grace and happiness as you surrender to life. Even so, daily challenges will remain, and you will tend to forget what I have shown you. But a deeper part of you will remember, and when you do, life’s problems will seem no more substantial than soap bubbles. The path will open before you where before there grew only weeds of confusion. Your future, and the future of all humanity, is a path into the Light, into a growing realization of the Unity with the

Creator and all creation. And what lies beyond is beyond description.”

*Dan Millman, former world champion athlete, coach, martial arts instructor, and college professor is author of “Way of the Peaceful Warrior” (adapted to film in 2006) and 15 other books.*

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## Re: Today

by Pamela Merly

There is nothing to do but to begin again. Today is a perfect day to do so. Yesterday is but an image in a rear-view mirror... with all of its imperfections, trials, and disappointments. There is nothing to do but to let it go and begin again. This is perhaps the greatest gift of all... that this day is again new. There are no penalties for what did or didn't occur yesterday that will carry over to today. No one is keeping score. Except me, and I can give up the dubious, self-appointed position of score-keeper.

Just as the hawk soars by, searching the field below for a tasty morsel... the same field that was barren yesterday, will today supply his need. All has changed and is fresh and new again on the great continuum of life. Time to begin again. For what else is there to do?

*Pamela Merly is a Reiki Master who communicates with animals.*



*You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope.*

*~ Thomas Merton*

# A POEM OF DESIRE

by Joseph Anthony

*From behind a veil of shadow and drifting  
darkness you appear,  
dressed in robes of luminous white.  
The dark waters of my soul  
carries pieces of my broken heart into your lap.  
You gather them in your skirts,  
move silently to the river's edge  
and spill them in.  
And where once there lived fires of grieving  
and mountains of suffering,  
now the mountains turn into wild horses,  
shimmering towards the horizon  
as an unfolding scroll of revelations  
and new testaments;  
and the fires become flocks of angels  
swirling in song.  
Every night you whisper:  
I ache to hear your every word,  
and when you finally  
break into whatever it is you long to be,  
you will see me moving towards you  
like wild horses and a flock of angels,  
and I will lift you up  
into myself  
and hold you as the sky holds the moon,  
and we will dream as one  
as the dawn slowly bathes us  
in dazzling light.*

*Joseph Anthony, author of "Following Your Heart's Desire" is a teacher, writer, musician, songwriter, storyteller, certified life-coach, certified self-esteem specialist for children, an educational consultant, an ordained minister, and offers healing work with Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). Visit Joseph's website [www.TappingWithMusic.com](http://www.TappingWithMusic.com) or call 267-626-3455*



## SPRING FUNDRAISER



Hello, Friends! Happy Spring!

Many of you have responded generously to our annual Spring Fundraiser as well as at other times of the year.

Each Spring our readers are encouraged to send a voluntary contribution to help cover the cost of publication and other ministry endeavors. For the cost of just one meal at a local restaurant, you can make a huge difference in supporting the ongoing work of this ministry.

This is a golden opportunity to say "yes" to the cycle of Giving and Receiving. Take a minute right now to write a check payable to **Agape Interfaith Ministries**, donate online at [www.AgapeInterfaith.org](http://www.AgapeInterfaith.org), or feel free to send a book or two of postage stamps, which also give great support. Your help truly does make a difference. Whether you send \$5 *or more*, every bit of support makes this sharing of inspiration possible.

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***Thank you!***

***You are a Blessing!***

I hope you find something worthwhile in each issue of this newsletter. If you have a question, comment, or submission for publication, please email me at [Jilleroni@juno.com](mailto:Jilleroni@juno.com). I would love to hear from you.

## Daily Word

*I am open and available to receive my good.*

An accident, a distressing diagnosis, a job loss – these are situations many of us would deem unfortunate or even disastrous. Yet if we stay open and available to a good outcome, we find great blessings ready and waiting for us to receive.

Today I am willing to see new possibilities unfold from any seeming difficulty. In acceptance of my humanity, I allow myself to grieve any loss as I clear inner space to receive my good. I am restored as I open to God's abundance.

Life invites me to grow, and I am open and available to the manifestation of God's abundant blessings at all times. As life unfolds, I look for the good in every experience.

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## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Self-Empowerment is published quarterly (4 issues/year)  
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief: Rev. Jill Sabin Carel  
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Subscriptions are available without charge.  
Tax-deductible donations are gratefully received.  
A suggested donation of \$5 or more per year is invited.

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Love & Blessings

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