

An Introduction to Unity of the Keys

WELCOME TO OUR CHURCH!

If this is your first visit to our church, we want you to know how glad we are that you are here. If you live in our area, we would love to have you join us again. If you are visiting the Key West area, we give thanks that you decided to join us today. In either case, you make our church family more complete by your presence. This pamphlet is designed to acquaint you with Unity of the Keys, so that if the Unity point of view is new to you, you can make an informed choice about whether to make our church your spiritual home.

MISSION STATEMENT: Our mission is to transform lives in the manner of Jesus Christ, through reaching, teaching, healing, fellowship, and prayer.

WHAT WE OFFER

Unity of the Keys is a center of personal and spiritual growth. All its services, workshops, and classes are designed to support you in becoming all God created you to be, and in having a better life. In each Sunday lesson and class you will receive practical tools to help you find inner joy, peace and harmony, as well as outer forms of abundance -- vibrant health, loving relationships, and plenty in every material way.

Each Sunday morning we provide positive, practical, motivational lessons, moving music, and tranquil, nourishing meditations. We also provide loving education and childcare for your children.

We believe that every problem we face has an answer and that every true desire we have can be fulfilled. We can learn to "tune in" to a Source of wisdom within us (God or the Holy Spirit) which will guide and direct us into that happiness, love, peace and outer abundance which is our rightful heritage as children of God. It is truly exciting to constantly see people transcend former limitations and to discover new depths of love, power, understanding, and self-mastery. It is also exciting to see people healed in mind, heart, body and relationships, and to see the power of faith-filled prayer demonstrated in many lives.

We teach that each person is created "in the image and after the likeness of God" (Genesis 1 :27), and that every person is inherently good. The true self or core of us is made of love, wisdom, life energy, and creative power. We are all fundamentally the same, regardless of sex, age, race, ethnic background, or sexual orientation.

WHAT IS THE UNITY MOVEMENT?

The Unity Movement is comprised of two organizations - The Unity Institute (formerly Unity School of Practical Christianity), with headquarters at Unity Village, Missouri, and the Association of Unity Churches International.

The Unity Institute offers prayer support through Silent Unity, our worldwide prayer ministry. It also offers spiritual education, renewal, and inspiration through its educational programs and weeklong retreats. In addition, it conducts a residential school of ministry. Finally, the Unity Institute publishes books, CD albums, and the magazines Daily Word and Unity.

The Association of Unity Churches International includes some 1,000 churches and other ministries in thirty-eight countries.

WHAT UNITY TEACHES

Listed below are Unity's teachings about some of the terms with which most people from Christian backgrounds are familiar. While it is not necessary to agree with any of these viewpoints, they are held by most who attend our services. However, our most important consideration is that our services and classes *help* you, not that you agree with us on every point.

Unity of the Keys is what is often called a "New Thought" church. This "new thought" (now well over one-hundred years old as a movement in North America) is that all people are inherently good and that God dwells within everyone. Other examples of New Thought churches are Divine Science and Religious Science. We strive to be one with seekers of all faiths. In fact, although we call what we teach "practical Christianity," there are aspects of several Eastern religions in what we teach and practice. We believe that "there are many paths to the mountain," and that whether God is called God, Spirit, Allah, Krishna, Divine Mind, or any other name, those who seek with an open mind and an open heart will find themselves advancing on their right spiritual path.

What we teach about:

HEAVEN

We teach that heaven is a state of mind and heart rather than a place we may go when we die. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God comes not with observation, neither shall they say, 'Lo, here! or, Lo, there!' for the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-22) This heaven, this state of mind is one of peace, harmony, love, innocence, and joy, and is attained as we experience oneness with God and other people.

HELL

Just as heaven is a mental, emotional state of love, joy, and peace so is hell an internal state of suffering, conflict, regret, and turmoil. Just as heaven is a self-created state, so is hell. Hell is not a place we go after we die. Jesus, when asked how many times to forgive, said "until seventy times seven." If Jesus instructed us so, can we expect that a God of love would do less and condemn someone to everlasting torment? God does not condemn us, but rather at all times sees our perfect Self. Hell is a mental and emotional state of our own creation, a perception of separateness that we can begin to undo at any time we so choose.

GOD

We teach that God is a very real Presence and Power, within and all around us, rather than a Being in some distant location. Rather than a loving Being, we believe that God is the actual quality of Infinite, Unconditional Love. God is also Infinite Intelligence or Divine Mind, as well as Power, the creative force of the universe, and Life, the animating principle. God is everywhere, evenly present Spirit.

Within each of us, as a state which is usually beyond our conscious mind, God is our Source of ideas, life, love, power and strength. To each person individually, God is "Father," to use Jesus' term. In today's language, he might have referred to God as "Parent," since God is not a Being who is male or female.

JESUS CHRIST

We teach that Jesus was Divine, and that so is everyone else. We do not see Jesus as inherently different from other people, but rather as one who totally understood and demonstrated the Divinity which is innately a part of every person. In our spiritual approach, we strive to be the religion *of* Jesus, rather than being a religion *about* Jesus. Instead of seeing him as the great exception, we see him as the great example. We ask, "What was Jesus' religion? What was his relationship to God? What was his method of prayer? How did he live his life?" Our objective is to do likewise, to follow him.

We teach that the term "Christ" is the name of the potential Divinity of each person, that the name "Jesus" is the name of the historical man who is our way-shower and master-teacher, and that the name "Jesus Christ" was his because he became in actual fact the complete expression of what is possible for all. We also teach that Jesus is our "savior," not because he died for us on the cross, but because through the example of his entire life on earth, he showed us the way to be saved from suffering, or a current-day hell, by changing our lives. We believe that Jesus' entire message was one of how to live in the Kingdom of Heaven by transforming our lives from ego-based to God-filled.

THE DEVIL

Just as we teach that God is not a being, so also do we teach that there is no being called the devil. There is but one Presence and Power in the universe, God. The devil, or Satan, is a biblical reference to a belief-state in human beings which today we often call the ego. When people identify with this belief state, they feel separate, cut off from God, and are fearful. This fear leads to such states as anger, hate, and greed. These in turn, lead to errors, or mistakes, such as mentally attacking others, or even stealing or killing. Being in this state, however, does not make us bad or "evil" (except as Jesus used the word "evil," meaning incomplete or immature). Instead, in that condition, we are ignorant or asleep to our true, Divine nature of love, joy, and peace. There is no "force of evil" in the universe, just as cold is not a force but the absence of heat and darkness is simply the absence of light.

ETERNAL LIFE

We teach that life is eternal, neither beginning with birth nor ending with death. We teach that each of us is a spiritual being who inhabits a body for a time in order to grow and learn lessons, but that our ultimate destiny is far beyond what can be equated with the body. We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. Rather, we are spiritual beings having a human experience. Most of us accept reincarnation (but not transmigration, or the embodiment of souls in animals) as the most likely scenario of how we grow and progress spiritually.

BAPTISM

To us, water baptism is not necessary as a condition of a better afterlife. No child enters the world "stained with sin," needing to be inwardly cleansed. To us, salvation is a term denoting a present-day possibility, meaning to be saved from a present-moment hell through a change in mind and attitude. Water baptism is a symbol. It represents the cleansing from our minds and hearts of the erroneous beliefs and suppressed pain which cause the problems we face in life. John the Baptist said, "I have baptized you with water, but there comes one after me who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

The meaning of the Greek word which we interpret as "baptize" is *"to imbue something to the point of saturation."* Thus, when Jesus said, "Go ye therefore into all the world, baptizing them in the name (which means nature) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," he was instructing us to "let our light Shine" so that others could also find their relationship with God, their Source, and be filled with "the Holy Spirit and with fire." Of course, this inner experience is not dependent upon an external ritual.

COMMUNION

A question which is sometimes asked by people who come from traditional Christian churches is, "Why don't you serve communion?" To us, true communion is an inner experience, one of knowing and feeling our union with God ("common union"), as well as with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Jesus spoke Aramaic, the common language of his day and location. This language contained many figures of speech. These colloquialisms were clearly understood by those to whom he was speaking. When Jesus said, "Take, eat," and "Take, drink," saying the bread and wine were his "body and blood given to us for the remission of sins," he was using symbolism to tell his disciples that whenever they gathered to "break bread" (and not just at the time of Passover), to remember - and rededicate themselves to - all for which his life stood.

"This is my body" was a figure of speech which meant "these are my teachings." "This is my blood" meant "this is my example, my life, who I am." At the "last supper," Jesus was saying to his disciples, "Do not forget the purpose of all we have been through together these past three years."

Those of us who claim to be "followers of the way" (the original name for Jesus' students), can also "do this in remembrance of me" by rededicating ourselves to the goal of living and sharing his teachings and example.

THE BIBLE

We refer to the **Bible** as our basic textbook We see it as being Divinely inspired, and we also teach that such inspiration did not stop with the end of Biblical days. Divine Mind continues to speak through many people today. That is why we use many books as texts. **Lessons in Truth** is one of our basic texts, as are several other Unity-published books. **A Course In Miracles** is another text book.

We see the **Bible** as the history of the Jewish people, the revelation of spiritual principles (especially the teachings of Jesus), and symbolically representing the growth and unfoldment of each person. Its importance today lies in the principles it teaches. These principles are as valid today as they were thousands of years ago. For example, when the Hebrew people put God first in their lives, their nation prospered. When they did not, they suffered. The same is true today.

Often, we refer to the "metaphysical" meaning of some story, person, or place in the Bible. This word comes from two words: "meta" (above or beyond) and "physical" (literal or material). Thus, a metaphysical interpretation of a Bible story is one beyond its literal meaning. For instance, the story of David and Goliath also speaks to a time when the part of us which wants to rely on God for the solution (David) meets a problem which seems ten feet tall (Goliath). As David continues to rely on God he is victorious, as we will be when we also rely on God.

To many of us, **A Course In Miracles** is, as it claims to be, Jesus restating and clarifying what he taught in his ministry on earth. It supports us in transforming our lives and in fulfilling our main purpose in life, which is forgiveness.

PRAYER

We teach that prayer produces definite, tangible results. In fact, we teach that our every thought is powerful. We are constantly co-creating (with God) our reality through our most deeply-held beliefs and emotions.

To us, prayer is not a way to get God to change. Our prayers are designed to change *us* so that we may accept more of God's good into our lives. Spirit is always desirous of giving us more health, happiness, and abundance than we know how to receive. With this in mind, our method of prayer is an affirmative one. An example would be, *"God's perfect plan of good is now established in my life, and I see it."* We continue to affirm this until we feel it, realize it, and really know it.

Another method of prayer we use is that of "asking," and our method of asking is one of claiming rather than begging. One example of this would be to pray, *"God, I want your help and guidance with a decision I have to make. Thank You for Your perfect answer."*

We then work on being open and receptive to seeing the answer. Another method of prayer is visualization, or seeing in our mind's eye the desired solution.

Far and away the most powerful method of prayer, however, is our everyday actions. We are constantly teaching ourselves what we believe to be the truth by the actions we take every moment of every day. For example, our daily actions are always teaching us that either one premise or the other is true: Either God's thought system of abundance is true, or our ego's thought system of lack is true. We can practice each day aligning our minds with Divine Mind by doing the things which will support us in knowing our oneness with God.

MEDITATION

One of the practices we teach, practice, and encourage is that of meditation. Some think of meditation as "the other half of two-way prayer." (We talk to God in prayer. God talks to us in meditation.) It is interesting to note that the Aramaic word for prayer meant "to wait patiently to catch God's thoughts." Meditation can also be thought of as a calming, relaxing exercise of focusing on a word, idea, sound, object, or phrase. As our minds become more relaxed and quiet, we also become more receptive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit within us.

Meditation is practiced with excellent results by many of the world's great religions. Many of us here practice a Buddhist form of meditation variously called Mindfulness Meditation or Insight Meditation. This is a way to use meditation to practice identifying with our "inner observer."

As you practice meditation, in whichever form you are guided to do so, you, too, will find its benefits are many. You will feel renewed, ideas will come to you with greater frequency and clarity, and you will find yourself becoming more aware of your spiritual self.

GOD'S WILL

We teach that it is God's will, or desire, for everyone to have happiness, inner peace, health, love, and an abundance of every good thing. Likewise, we teach that it is not God's will that people get sick, suffer, and live in poverty. As we learn more and more to claim our oneness with God and each other, we move ever closer to the good which is our Divine heritage.

As you think of the preceding ideas, remember that it is not necessary to agree with all of them in order to join us for our services or classes, to receive counseling, or to participate in one of our events. As stated earlier, we are not here to convert you. We are here to support you in having the life you want. Our prayer is that our beliefs are constantly growing, expanding, and becoming more universal. Our goal is to constantly make them more practical as well.

These viewpoints are presented so you can make an informed choice in deciding whether to make Unity your spiritual home. Many have said, "Finding a church like this is like coming home." If this feels like your right place, welcome home.

How Is This Church Supported?

Unity of the Keys is an autonomous, self-governing, non-profit corporation which is completely supported by the contributions, tithes, and tuitions of those it serves. Those of us who are leaders of this church practice tithing our money, our time, and our talents, and we encourage you to receive the personal benefits of doing the same. The church itself also tithes 10% of its income to the organizations by whom we feel supported and nourished spiritually. Tithing constantly reminds us that God in us is our unlimited Source of abundance.

What Is a Love Offering?

Some of our classes and programs are offered on a "love offering basis." Many people have wondered what the term "love offering" means. Here is a brief explanation.

Financially speaking, this ministry is a business. Its income must exceed its expenses in order for it to be sustained and to grow. It receives income and has salaries and expenses to pay. It offers "products" (spiritual lessons, prayer, counseling, classes, etc.) and it has "customers" (those who receive the products). The difference between a ministry and, say, a hardware store, is that in a hardware store the prices are fixed by the store. If a customer wants a hammer, he looks at the hammer's price and decides if he wants the hammer enough to pay the asked price.

In a ministry, the price of the "product" is often determined by the receiver. The church desires to make its services available to all, regardless of financial position. Some people automatically give a certain amount "because they always have." What we ask you to do instead is to give in accord with the VALUE you are receiving from this church being here, and from this particular service or class. In this way, we at Unity of the Keys can determine the effectiveness of our programs. We know that the more we provide practical help, the more the ministry will prosper and be able to move forward in growth.

Whenever the church receives a "love offering," the amount you give is between you and God in you. We do not support you in "giving from guilt." We *do* support you in giving with love and gratitude, as a reflection of what you are receiving. We encourage you to begin practicing the idea that you can ask God in you for guidance as to how much to give and that you can hear God speaking to you through your own thoughts.

Also, when you give to the church, we ask you to be guided by the principle of making a "contribution" rather than a "donation." The word "donation" connotes something left over, something which doesn't feel like a part of you, something you can "spare." A contribution *does* feel like a part of you. It is something you include in your financial

planning and is a statement of the value you place on this part of your life.

What Does Tithing Mean?

We teach, practice, and encourage tithing. Tithing is the plan suggested by the **Bible** to ensure your own sense of security and abundance as well as to ensure the success of people and organizations that you want to support. Tithing means to designate a certain percentage of income, as it is received and before expenses, to be given to God. Ten percent is the figure suggested in the Bible (the word "tithes" means "tenth").

In such a program of planned giving, we instruct people to go within and ask Spirit within them where to give this gift. One guide is to ask yourself which people or organizations you believe are adding something of real value to the world. And, one way to determine this is to ask yourself where *you* have received *your* help.

This person or organization is someone or something in which you can believe, and in which your gift is a wise investment in the future. A tithe is not to be given as a bargain or with strings attached, but in gratitude to God. As you give regularly, you will be nourishing your faith in God as your unlimited Source. Tithing will prosper you as you build this faith by the action of regular giving. It will also prosper those whom you believe are creating a better world

Our Volunteer Program

One of the most exciting aspects of Unity of the Keys is its volunteer program. It is an educational program and is devoted to ensuring that you receive more from it than you give to it. In this program, you will discover that you are always more important than the job you do. If you would like to know more about this program and the volunteer opportunities available to you, please see one of the ministers or the director of our volunteer program.

We are pleased you took the time to read this booklet about our church. If you would like more information, talk to the Minister or a member of the church's Board of Trustees.

We can be reached by telephone at 305-296-5888

Our email address is church@unityofthekeys.org. Our website is at www.unityofthekeys.org.