#### 2/16/25 Sunday Message

#### Foundations IV (Principle 5)

#### Rev Nina Clark

“It was morning, and the new sun sparkled gold across the ripples of a gentle sea. A mile from shore a fishing boat chummed the water…and a crowd of a thousand seagulls came to dodge and fight for food…. But way off alone, out by himself beyond boat and shore, Johnathan Livingston Seagull was practicing…”

Jonathan Livingston Seagull was determined to press the limits of known seagull flight and so every day he was in the sky practicing, experimenting, learning… but time and time again, he would fall short. And then, one night, after the 1000th seeming failure, inspiration hit - an inspired thought… a higher thought… a divine thought…

He was flying back to shore at night, after a failed attempt left him unconscious in in the dark, cold waters. He’d given up and had stopped trying, which can often be that place that leaves us open to inspiration, to something beyond our own limited imaginings… He’d given up and he was flying back to shore in the dark, when a voice said to him, “Get down! Seagulls never fly in the dark! If you were meant to fly in the dark you’d have the eyes of an owl! You’d have charts for brains! You’d have a falcon’s short wings!”

“There in the night, a hundred feet in the air, Johnathan Livingston Seagull - blinked. His pain, his resolutions, ”to quit, to be normal, to be just another one of the flock,” vanished.

“Short wings. A falcon’s short wings! That’s the answer!”

Johnathan Livingston Seagull “…climbed two thousand feet above the black sea, and without a moment of thought of failure and death, he brought his forewings tightly into his body, left only narrow swept daggers of his wingtips extended into the wind, and fell into a vertical dive.

The wind was a monster roar at his head. Seventy miles per hour, ninety, a hundred and twenty and faster still. The wing-strain now a hundred and forty miles per hour wasn’t nearly as hard as it had been before at seventy, and with the faintest twist of his wingtips he eased out of the dive and shot above the waves, a gray cannonball under the moon.”

If you’ve read the story, you know that Johnathan Livingston Seagull embodied the divine of idea of the Truth of him, he released the limiting beliefs that he’d been steeped in from a baby and that surrounded him in the seagull flock he grown up in, and became a master of flight, a knower that he was free and unlimited, one with the wind, one with the Great Gull.

And this is what Unity’s fifth tenant is all about. I live what I know into being. Knowing and understanding spiritual principle is not enough. I must also live the truth that I know.

Unity co-founder Myrtle Fillmore wrote: “Unity’s mission in the world is to help people release those fears and hurts that bind and confine, that we may experience and express the love that we are.”

We do this by living Unity’s first four tenants into being.

Welcome to the fourth and final talk in a series called Foundations.

For those of you who might be new with us today, at the beginning of every year we like to return to our basic teachings because, just like re-reading a book you’ve read several times only to discover bits that seem like they for sure weren’t there when you last read it, when we revisit our core teachings we end up both deepening our understanding of them and discovering new insights.

Each week we’ve been doing a little review so that we’re all the same page as we move forward. For those of you who are joining us for the first time, or for those who have missed a Sunday or two, it will give you an idea of what we’ve already talked about so that you can move forward with us.

In Unity, 5 spiritual principles are the cornerstone of all our teachings. We use the phrase “Spiritual principle” when we’re talking about a rule or law that is universal, unchanging, unbiased, unlimited, unerring and impersonal.

Principle works always, regardless of whether or not we understand it. Think of gravity – no matter what you release from your hand or throw off the roof, it falls to the ground.

Spiritual principles are just like that. 100% reliable, they aren’t fickle with the season or our mood, or whether we’ve been good or bad, we can rely on them to always work. And when we learn them, we can use them.

Unity’s Five Principle can be articulated this way:

1. God Is Infinite, everywhere present, everywhere Presence.
2. I am of God, for I cannot be outside of the only thing that is.
3. Our thoughts have creative power to influence events and determine our experiences.
4. Prayer is creative thinking that reveals our unity with God-Mind and brings forth wisdom, healing, prosperity and everything good.
5. Knowing and understanding spiritual principle is not enough. I must also live the truth that I know.

Principle One says that God is the infinite substance that sources all of creation. God or Spirit is All. God is All There Is. There is only One Infinite Ground of All Being. When we get, to the best of our finite ability, that only One something can be Infinite, the rest of what we teach falls neatly into place.

We talked about how everyone from those inspired folks who penned the Bible to Greek philosophers and quantum physicists are now all on the same page about this Infinite.

Psalm 139:

“Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there;

if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea,

even there your hand will guide me,

your right hand will hold me fast.”

Baruch Spinoza, Jewish philosopher who from the 1600s, wrote: “There is only one substance in the universe; it is God; and everything else that is, is in God. God is the infinite, necessarily existing (that is, uncaused), unique substance of the universe.”

And Selbie Joseph, author of the Physics of God, wrote, “according to M-theory, the most accepted version of string theory, most of the cosmos is an “effectively infinite ocean of energy.”

In New Thought, we use the word Infinite to describe this One Life, One Power, One Presence that is back of everything and out of which everything that exists arises.

And since there is just this One Substance, it logically follows that we must be of It. It follows that we cannot be separate from the only thing that is.

And this is Unity’s Second Principle - I am God in expression. I am of God, for I cannot be outside of the only thing that is. This principle states that we are spiritual beings, we are souls in an earth suit, we are individuations of the Infinite All That Is.

We are Divine expressions of One Infinite God. We are emanations of the All That Is. We are made out of it because it is the only thing that there is for anything to be made out of.

Unity teaches us that God is right where you are, as you, because it cannot not be. We are not separate from it because we cannot be separate from the Only Thing there is. There cannot be Infinite AND anything. Not Infinite and me, not infinite and you. We are of it.

And so once again it logically follows that all that is True of this Infinite Divine Presence, must be true of us, for we are made out of It. And so this means that since God is Love, Wisdom, Peace, Joy, Creativity, Light, Intelligence… so must you be.

This means that we cannot be separate from Love, Wisdom, Peace, Joy, Creativity, Light, Intelligence. We cannot say Love and me, Creativity and me. Wisdom and me. These aspects of the Infinite are inherent within us.

These first two principles or tenants are inseparable. Because God is Infinite, because there is just One Infinite Ocean of Energy, One energy verse, One Ground of all Being, then clearly, when I say God is All I am also automatically saying I am of God.

The third of Unity’s Five Principles tells us that our thoughts and beliefs are formative. We create our own reality through our thoughts and beliefs.

Because our minds are one with the creative mind of God, we have the power to create our experiences by the activity of our thinking. Everything in the material world has its origins in thought.

And this is true of both our conscious and subconscious thoughts. Most of us give a lot of energy to old habitual thoughts without even knowing that we’re doing so. Beliefs that we give energy to whether they are of unworthiness, of not enoughness are just as creative as beliefs of lovability and abundance.

And of course, this doesn’t mean that every thought that pops in your head manifests - if that was so, can you imagine the mess that would happen during the Super Bowl?

What it means is that the thoughts that we give power and energy to create. The more energy - emotional energy, focused energy - we give to a thought the more creative power that it has.

Unity’s fourth tenant is I pray. Prayer is conscious, intentional, focused thought that reveals our unity with God-Mind and brings forth wisdom, healing, prosperity and the good that we desire.

The word “prayer” comes pre-loaded for many of us depending on our religious or spiritual background. For many of us it is synonymous with “to ask God - a God separate from us - for something,” or “to ask God - a God separate from us - to intervene in our lives for some positive benefit.”

For those of you who might be new to us today, I want you to know that Unity embraces and welcomes you however you pray. There is room under our roof for any and all forms of prayer. However you pray is beautiful and holy and sacred.

At its heart, prayer is communion with God, and if you find it walking in nature, or listening to inspirational music, or losing yourself in spectacular art, or praying in the manner in which you were raised, we celebrate that.

That said, in Unity we do teach a form of prayer called “Affirmative Prayer.” And it is this form of prayer we are referring to in our fourth tenant or principle.

This fourth tenant is intimately intertwined with our third tenant in that thought, all thought is creative. In essence, affirmative prayer in its broadest sense, is a logical process of reasoning with ourselves, also referred to as an intentional, on purpose, divine argument, with the purpose of clearing our own consciousness and aligning ourselves with the highest consciousness we can.

Rev. Michael Beckwith says that, “You must begin to speak and articulate the world you want to live in. You have to say what it looks like, feel it, and participate in its energy.”

It begins with our recognition of the all-pervading, universal power by whatever name you choose to call it. In this form of prayer, we affirm that which is already TTrue, shifting our attention away from human circumstances and focusing on our spiritual nature, our oneness with the Infinite.

From this state of awareness, we know a Truth beyond our circumstances. We realize our capacity to think and act according to that new awareness.

Of note: Affirmative prayer does not change anything “out there in the world of form” nor does it change God! Prayer changes us – by expanding our awareness that we are One with the All That Is and thus all that is True of It is true of us.

And this brings us to Unity’s fifth tenant or principle: “ I live. I live what I know into being. Knowing and understanding spiritual principle is not enough. I must also live the truth that I know.”

I know that there are stories in this congregation from those of you who have put these teachings into action in your lives. Stories abound of people living happier lives, inspiring others, discovering solutions to challenges, bringing people together, dispelling hate.

And I also know that just as many of us get right up to this point and then stop short of putting our teachings into action. Or maybe we do it for awhile and then something stops us from continuing. Or maybe we apply them in one part of our life but not in another.

I believe that the reason this happens is fear. Fear in its myriad of faces: fear of failure, fear of looking stupid, fear of being wrong, fear of change…

In Frank Herbert’s Sci-Fi novel Dune, the Bene Gesserit, a religious sisterhood of powerful women, are taught a litany against fear. They believe that if humans are not capable of transcending fear, they are then doomed to be controlled by it, and thus unable to ascend to a higher level of consciousness.

The litany is as follows: “I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain.”

If fear stands in your way, and for most of us it does on one level or another, I invite you to do what it takes to release your grip that fear so that you can bring Unity’s teachings to life in your life.

I’d like to close with a story that illustrates putting legs on an inspired idea and staying the course.

Ever since breaking his hip, 99-year-old Tom Moore had to use a walker. While recuperating in the hospital, Tom was well cared for by National Health Service staff and he really wanted to do something to give back.

But what could he possibly do at 99 with frail health and limited mobility?

Tom had an inspired thought - he would walk around his garden with his walker like he always did, but he would do so to raise money for the NHS. His goal was to do 100 laps by his 100th birthday and he and his family figured he’d raise around 1,000 pounds and perhaps make the local paper.

His determination and desire to do good inspired his daughter to spread the word on social media. Tom went “viral” and his optimism, and constant refrain that together we could achieve miracles, attracted the attention of a nation.

Everywhere, individuals started donating, sending in well wishes and encouragement. Tom became a source of inspiration and positivity.

Tom did complete 100 laps well before his 100th birthday, and he ended up raising over 38 million pounds, which is over 40 million dollars.

Lau Tzu wrote, “If you want to awaken all of humanity, then awaken all of yourself.”

I’m going to repeat that and I want you to really open your ears and your heart to these words. “If you want to awaken all of humanity, then awaken **all** of yourself. If you want to eliminate the suffering in the world, then eliminate all that is dark and negative in yourself. Truly, the greatest gift you have to give is that of your own self-transformation.”

We too, can be like Johnathan Livingston Seagull and embody the divine Truth that we are, releasing our grip on what we believe our limitations to be and become masters of flight, knowers that we are free and unlimited, one with the wind, one with the Great Gull.