#### 1/26/25 Sunday Message

#### Foundations 1 (Principles 1 & 2)

#### Rev Nina Clark

When I first started with New Thought teachings, the minister would start every year, or maybe it was just most years, with a review of what the heck it is that we teach.

Because honestly, with our human tendency to complicate things, or get bored with one thing and move on to try a whole bunch of other things, or because daily life gets in the way, what we teach here can get lost in the sauce. Or we just plain forget because it’s not forefront in our minds.

I found that I enjoyed having those reviews, because every year I either remembered something I had forgotten, or I heard the same thing in a different way, and I was able to take our teachings a little bit deeper.

It’s like the way you can read a book or watch a movie, and then a year later read or watch the same one and notice things that you would have sworn weren’t there the first time.

This is how it should be: each time we review the fundamentals of what we teach, we either discover something that reveals to us where we’ve grown in our understanding, or we are given a new opportunity to deepen.

And so, I’m excited to start this new year together with all of you, revisiting our core teachings to see where we are in our own personal walk, strengthen our understanding of them so that we can go deeper and so that we have a firm foundation to stand on - because that’s what our teachings help us do: build a strong spiritual foundation so that we can live more soul-satisfying lives and for those times when the waters of life get choppy.

I heard a quote the other day, “Simplicity is evidence of the most advanced teaching.”

I think that applies to what we teach. What we teach is simple, so simple that it might be dismissed by some, and it might be hard for many of us to really get our heads around.

It’s simple, but not necessarily easy. Not easy, because we have to get ourselves out of the way in order to embody these principles. We may have to get other things that we’ve been taught out of the way in order to embody these principles.

At the core of what we teach is the Principle of Oneness. We teach that there is only One Thing. Call it what you like, God, The Infinite, Life, Love, the Divine, Substance, the Universe, Jehovah, the Quantum Field, Brahman, Yahweh, Great Spirit. It’s all the same thing.

This is the foundation upon which everything else that we teach rests.

Simple, but not easy, right? Look around the room here. We see bodies that appear separate from ours, we see chairs which appear separate from us, windows, walls, a floor.

We look up in the night sky and see stars that seem separate from us, driving around we see cars that seem separate from us. Everything we perceive appears to be separate from us, right?

We rely on our senses to make our way in this world and regardless of what our explanation is for this world of form, we can all agree that it’s helpful to know that there is something called a table so we don’t walk into it, or a Lego so we don’t step on it, or a warm chocolate chip cookie so we can eat it.

But that also means that we have to constantly remind ourselves of the truth back of what we experience with our senses. And that truth is that there is only One.

Einstein wrote, “Concerning matter, we have been all wrong. What we have called matter is energy whose vibration has been so lowered as to be perceptible to the senses. There is no matter.”

Try telling that to your toe when you stub it on the sidewalk. Or to your finger when you slam it in the car door.

But it’s true.

From the book the Principle of Oneness, by Russel Anthony Gibbs: “On a subatomic level, it is not possible to determine where anything begins or ends, because there is no true separation of individual energy despite the illusions of the physical realities. Nothing exists outside this field of energy…”

The word principle used in this context refers to a core truth or universal law that is a timeless and unchanging truth that applies to everyone, everything, everywhere, all the time. A principle works regardless of whether or not we understand it, it works no matter what our mood.

In order for a principle to be reliable as a principle, it must be universal, unchanging, unbiased, unlimited and unerring.

An example I like to use is that of my son when he was discovering the joy of cheerios – both the joy of how tasty there were, and the joy of discovering gravity.

He would drop them over the edge of his high-chair and then quickly crane his neck to see if they had fallen to floor – again! Over and over, he tested his theory and on his own, he discovered this principle.

Later he learned that it didn’t matter what he dropped – cheerio, spoon, fork, napkin, bowl…soup… it all disappeared out of sight and when he leaned over to check, it was always on the floor. It didn’t matter if he was happy or sad, sleepy or grumpy – whatever he dropped always went to the floor.

Spiritual principles are just like that. 100% reliable, they aren’t fickle with the weather or the seasons or our mood, or whether we’ve been good or bad, we can rely on them to always work. They don’t work for some of us and not for others, they work equally for all.

And when we learn them, we can use them, just like humankind learned to work with gravity to fly planes, build skyscrapers and houses and spaceships.

So what? My favorite spiritual question! Why is it important to know and embody this Principle of Oneness?

The degree to which we are able to consciously embody this principle, this Principle of Oneness, is the degree to which we can consciously attract greater possibilities and happier conditions into our life experience.

Why? Because - since there is only one All That Is, and nothing can exist outside of this Oneness, then we - you and I - cannot be outside of it. We cannot be outside of the only thing that is.

And therefore, all that is true of It has to be true of us, because it cannot not be.

An example from our finite world could be water. Water can take the form of ice, snow, hail, clouds, fog or gas. But it is still water at its core.

In an infinite fashion, the infinite conscious energy slows itself down to take many forms - people, trees, planets, supernovas - but at the end of the day, it is still the same infinite conscious energy.

Unity teaches five foundational principles and the first two foundational principles and the first two of those are:

1. God Is Infinite, everywhere present, everywhere Presence.
2. I am of God, for I cannot be outside of the only thing that is.

God or Spirit or The Universe is the source and creator of all. That there is no other enduring power. Life is Absolute Good and present everywhere.

It can also be said these ways: Spirit is All. Substance is All There Is. The Divine is Infinite. The Infinite is One, and therefore I must be of this One because I cannot be outside of the All.

Everything else we do and believe rests on Unity’s first principle, and so let’s bask in some God is Allness, in some Infinite Oneness.

God is.

Truly, this first principle is really all that we need to know. If we get this, truly get this, everything else falls into place.

But…it’s one thing to say it and it’s another thing to intellectually get it. It’s an entirely other thing to have it in the very fiber of your knowing. But once we do know this, then it becomes crystal clear that we cannot, no matter how hard we try, be separate from the All That Is.

The efficacy of everything we teach rests upon having that firm foundation of knowing that we cannot, no matter how hard we try, be separate from God.

And that means deeply, profoundly, getting it into our bones that there is only One Something, One Infinite Something back of all that we see that appears to be separate.

I think for many of us this journey of understanding begins intellectually. Not all of us. There are some of us who wake up one morning, like Eckhart Tolle and we’re there.

But for more of us, it seems, that we take it in in bits - we read about Infinite, about Oneness, we talk about it, we immerse ourselves in this idea, we meditate on it, and then our steady, committed work begins to bring it into lived form.

We first believe it. Well, actually, first we DON’T believe it, then we want to believe it. Then we believe it. Then we understand it, then we know it. Then we live it.

And so, let’s begin by seeing if we can understand Infinite – at least to the best of our ability as finite beings. Because being finite, we will never truly understand the Infinite.

During my early studies in New Thought, I was deep into wrestling with a passage from Ernest Holmes’ book Science of Mind where he wrote

“…. the Infinite must be One, for there could not be two Infinites.” At the time I was still thinking of infinite in terms of stars and grains of sand, so I was really struggling with the concept.

And then I had a conversation that could have brought a halt to the whole New Thought thing. It was on a Friday morning and I was working in a breakfast restaurant.

My customer was a multiple PhD mathematician/ engineer/genius, and somewhere between my serving him coffee and blueberry pancakes, we started talking about oohhh, you know, the usual kind of stuff -infinity- or, in actuality – he was talking about infinity while I stood there with a cooling coffee pot and a blank stare.

Most of it went so far over my head that I couldn’t even feel it ruffle my hair, but his insistence that mathematics proved that infinite didn’t exist and thus God didn’t exist sent my barely stacked building blocks scattering to the four winds.

But something inside of me urged me to keep going and so I did. And after quite a bit of reading and listening and researching, I reached the rudimentary understanding that there are, very generally speaking, two kinds of infinite. The first is a quantitative – or a counting infinite.

We speak of an “infinite” number of grains of sand but there actually is a finite number of grains of sand simply because other things exist in the universe that limit the sand.

There are rocks and trees and dandelions and flamingos and water, none of which is sand. The sand is not everywhere present – although it sometimes seems that way when we’re having a picnic at the beach-so although we could never count every grain of sand, this is not the kind of infinite we are referring to.

This is a quantitative infinite.

The other kind of infinite is qualitative or conceptual. It is back of what we can see, back of what we can count. Those things that we can count are expressions of the Infinite out of which everything arises.

From the Physics of God: “most of the cosmos is a high-frequency energy realm,” what author Selbie Joseph calls the energy verse, an “effectively infinite ocean of energy.”

Psalm 139 puts it this way:

“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.”

Charles Fillmore said: “God is Infinite Life.” And “Divine mind is the one and only reality.”

Ellen Debenport in her book “The Five Principles” writes “God.. is a field of Love and Intelligence which is the foundation of the universe.”

Some people fear that thinking of God in this way, as an Infinite field of conscious energy rather than as an all-powerful being that looks over us from a faraway heaven, strips us from having a personal relationship with God.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. God being Infinite means that God is also intensely intimate, because where you are, God has to be. God individuates as you – you can’t get any more personal than that!

First, by understanding that there is an Infinite Substance or Infinite Ocean of Energy, or Ground of all Being, or Boundless Mind, we can come to know our Oneness – with God and with all of creation.

We are not separate – we cannot not be of God.

And in this Oneness, we can know that God then, must express or individuate as us, for there is nothing else for us to be made out of.

God does not stop at our skin. God CANNOT stop at our skin. Just because our eyes show us a “separate you” from a “separate me” it’s easy to fall into the belief that we are separate.

Even phrases like “I live move and have my being in God” can quietly, sneakily conjure the image of us being kind of like fish, swimming in this sea of God, but that sea stops at our skin.

That image says it surrounds but is not us. Even saying “I connect to God” implies that we can be disconnected from God, but how could we disconnect from that which we are?

Unity teaches that God is right where you are, as you, because there is only One therefore you are an expression or an individuation of it. We are not separate from it. We cannot be separate from the Only Thing there is no matter how hard we try! It is an impossibility.

There cannot be Infinite AND anything. Not Infinite and me, not infinite and you. Just One. Just Oneness. There is only Life, or Love, or the Universe because there is only One Infinite Something.

And since The All That Is is everywhere, that also means there isn’t just a teeny tiny little spark of God in you, because that would mean the rest of you or me isn’t God. All of you, every particle, every molecule, every atom is all God, all the time.

Which is Unity’s Second Principle: I am. I am God in expression. 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.

As far as I’m concerned, 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, I must be made of God because since there is Only One Thing I must be part of that One Thing. And so, saying God is All is also saying I am of God. It’s a delightfully inescapable conclusion once we understand Infinite!

In New Thought language, we might say that the One Infinite Mind is constantly thinking matter into being. We might say that God or Mind is constantly thinking me into being, thinking you into being. It is constantly, continuously, consciously on purpose, individuating as you and me.

And so for me, really understanding the Principle of Oneness is the foundation of all that we teach.

The poet Seng Ts’an says it this way: “The One is none other than the All, the All none other than the One. Take your stand on this, and the rest will follow of its own accord.”

And again - so what? My favorite spiritual question! Why is this important to know? Come back next week to learn why!