

Resources for Christian Science Nursing Care

Recently Fern Lodge changed the rate for nursing care at the facility to \$185 per day. This is the first increase in our charges since 1992, although our costs have risen for the past couple of years. The Fern Lodge Board of Directors carefully considered the consequences of a rate increase, both for Fern Lodge and for the patients who come for nursing care.

Our commitment is to maintain an inspired, dedicated and competent staff of Christian Science nurses, a loving and efficient staff providing housekeeping, maintenance and kitchen services, and a facility in good repair, clean and well furnished. We set our rates to cover the cost of fulfilling our commitment. We are glad to assure our community that we offer excellent care, while our rate remains one of the lowest among Christian Science nursing facilities in California.

The cost of staying at a nursing facility may present a challenge for individuals who need care. If a facility is dedicated to providing care without limiting its services to those who have funds to pay the full cost, then the facility shares in this challenge.

The means by which the cost of nursing is met is as varied as the care itself. In some cases an individual has sufficient funds to pay the full cost of their stay, and some have also given generous donations in recognition of the value of the care they receive. Other

patients have some form of insurance that will pay all or a portion of the cost. From all we have learned from patients and their families and from our experience, we cannot recommend any specific company or policy, however Fern Lodge does cooperate with *Fan-Ark*, which offers a program that is like insurance in many ways but which is very reasonably priced. We will send a *Fan-Ark* brochure to you in the future, but if you would like more information sooner we will welcome your call.

*Our hearts are filled beyond measure,
and we must give what we've received.*

It may seem legitimate to ask how Fern Lodge can afford to offer financial assistance. Our reply is, "How could we afford not to?" If Christian Science nursing were just a difficult job which left nurses tired and the facility depleted, we might not be willing or able to give financial aid in addition to nursing care. But Christian Science nursing is an enriching activity.

True nursing is inspired by divine Love, which meets all human needs. Nursing is an expression of Soul's individuality, and "Soul has infinite resources with which to bless mankind" (*Science and Health*, p. 60). Christian Science nursing is a service to God. Nursing does not deplete our energy and affection,

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Fern Lodge Focus

April 2000

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Withdrawal from MediCal — a message from the Fern Lodge Board

As Christian Scientists we understand that God provides for His children. Mrs. Eddy states, "Divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need." Our spiritual growth involves increased understanding of the spiritual nature of true care and of the resources our Father-Mother God provides to meet each need.

Fern Lodge has been a MediCal provider because we wished to offer Christian Science nursing for all who would benefit from this care, regardless of their ability to pay the cost. This State administered Federal program is designed to help pay medical costs for indigent individuals.

In February Fern Lodge withdrew from participation in the MediCal program. We want to assure our friends and supporters that this action will not affect the Christian Science nursing care we offer for the patients who have been receiving financial assistance through this government welfare program.

One MediCal requirement was that we identify Fern Lodge as a long-term care facility and MediCal recipients as needing long-term care. Planning for on-going care is not consistent with a daily expectation of healing as a result of Christian Science treatment. It is clear that we should strive to remove every obstacle in thought that may have an adverse effect on each patient's prayer and hope for healing. Fern Lodge's withdrawal from MediCal is a step on our path of understanding God's healing presence as well as His bountiful provision.

In addition, recent changes in Federal regulations indicate that the Federal Health Care Financing Administration may have more involvement in determining some policies and activities of Christian Science nursing facilities which seek the use of Federal funds under Medicare or MediCal/Medicaid. The new regulations specify certain reporting requirements and restrictions regarding the nursing care we can give. Our participation may invite further intrusion of nursing models derived primarily from data gathered

from medical nursing homes and hospitals, as well as from other religious nonmedical institutions. We feel our continued participation is not wise.

We have heard it said that Fern Lodge does not need donations. This is not true. MediCal did not provide sufficient funds to pay the full cost of a patient's care, so even when we offered this assistance we gave substantial benevolence. We also serve patients who need financial aid but do not qualify for welfare assistance. Now, in addition to the benevolence we always have given, we will need to replace the funds we formerly received through MediCal if our services are not to change.

You can assist now by contributing to support benevolence and building repair projects at Fern Lodge. You also can help by informing your family and friends, as well as branch churches and Christian Science pupil's associations, of the care given at Fern Lodge and of the financial aid needed to pay for this care. We are grateful for whatever you are inspired to do on behalf of those who have financial needs.

Our Master, Christ Jesus, prayed and said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always," (*John 11*). We pray for the spirit of our Master and the conviction that our Father hears and answers every sincere prayer. We are indebted to Christ Jesus and to Mary Baker Eddy for their examples which strengthen our trust in God to meet the needs of everyone at Fern Lodge.

Thank you for working with us in the holy ministry of Christian Science nursing. If you have any comments or questions, please call George Strong, Fern Lodge Administrator, at 510-886-2448.

THE FERN LODGE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Realizing God's Care — excerpts from a talk by Thomas C. Asher, C.S.

Some years ago there was an account of care in a National Geographic magazine. The article told of a mother panda bear caring for her newborn cub. The panda mother paid total attention to her newborn. The cub lived on the warm fur of the mother's chest. The watchful panda mother stayed in her den, almost motionless, for 25 days. She took no time to feed or exercise herself. The panda mother completely subordinated herself to the needs of her newborn. Her care was tender, strong, and unwavering.

The faithful care of the panda mother gives us a picture of God's gentle care. God tenderly embraces, cradles, and protects us. We are never ignored or abandoned. Divine Love is always here, washing us, feeding us, giving us strength, caring for every detail. God adores and sustains His creation. God treasures and protects His offspring. Since God is purely loving, eternally loving, and perfectly loving, man is even safer than the panda cub.

God's love is so complete that it even enables man to understand the fact of God's nearness. Just as the cub knows only the goodness of its mother, so we can know only the goodness of our Father-Mother. Each one of us has the divinely established right to feel the close warmth of God's constant care. Our Father-Mother doesn't allow any circumstance to obstruct the manifestation of His affection. At this very moment, whatever challenges we are facing, we can realize the presence and power of God's enveloping care.

I had never paid much attention to the word "realize" until recently when I was reading Irving Tomlinson's wonderful book, *Twelve Years with Mary Baker Eddy*. He tells, on p. 271, of a morning when Mrs. Eddy called the members of her household together and said, "I want you all to talk less and realize more. The devil gets after us when we talk, but he is foiled when we demonstrate the truth." She concluded, "Don't discourage me by talking so much."

To realize God's care we see it, and we live it. We know what's true and we demonstrate what's true. The Master, Christ Jesus, presented these aspects of realizing when he said, "Ye shall know the truth," — that is, ye shall realize what's authentic, ye shall grasp what is of God— "and the truth shall make you free," the truth will be realized, made actual, and tangible (*John 8:32*). Mortal mind, which is anti-Christ, tries to persuade us that knowing the truth of God's care and being free are distinct entities. Mortal mind suggests that we can recognize powerful truths about God and man, and then not experience truth's realization in daily life.

However, the Science of Christ is showing us that the same Mind that unveils reality, causes reality to be experienced. When we realize truth, it is our experi-

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ence. Mrs. Eddy allows for no gap between knowing and experiencing truth when she writes, "...if the healer realizes the truth, it will free his patient" (*Rud. 13:19*).

God enables us to realize what's authentic. We might think of it like this: "With the call comes the capacity." When you are called to nurse another, remember that divine Love is enabling you to tenderly and appropriately provide this care. By the way, when we speak of nursing today, let's include the sense of nursing another out of sin. If you have a family member who seems to be in the grip of some fault, he needs patient care just as much as one with a physical claim. We can love enough to realize the impotence of sin. It has no power to put out man's God-given light.

God is the basis of all our worthwhile action. God doesn't impel us to take a step and then leave us to fumble along by ourselves. God maintains what he

creates. He is all-acting and governs every bit of His creation. We are His reflection. We reflect the holiness to trust God, and to quit keeping score of how much we think we are giving. Real love doesn't keep score. The nurse, practitioner, or family member doesn't dwell on how much attention a case has demanded. We just care. We care because God cares. We strive to remain on fire with the conviction that caring is done by reflection, and there is no burden in reflection.

If we get tired, or personal, or discouraged in helping another, we may need to recall God's tender

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care for us. God shows us how to pull back if we are allowing a case to dominate our thinking or acting. He reminds us that we are buoyant, confident, trusting. Isn't God enabling us to see ourselves as His reflection? Isn't this vision part of God's loving care for us? Inspiration is our right. We are not mesmerized by matter because we are formed to be totally attentive to Spirit. God makes us receptive to Himself.

The ability to listen is standard equipment. At all times we can listen to the real truth teller. We don't have to go along with collective human opinions. We can turn down the volume of the senses, the constant rattle-prattle of mortal mind, and we can realize, a little more each day, the practicality of God's care.

Whenever we listen intently to God, we realize that we can't come and go from His loving arms. We feel distant from divine care only when we bow to the unreliable evidence of material sense. But when we open thought to the reality of divine Love's presence, we naturally come to feel more sure of God's infinite attention and man's responsiveness to His attention.

Sometimes this yielding seems to involve quite a struggle. We tend to hold tightly to our particular view of dire circumstances. We need to get tough with this false view. There is a certain warrior aspect that may be needed in healing. While speaking of Love's tender care today, we don't want to forget the healing thrust of courage, determination, self-discipline, and persistent effort.

Sometimes a healing may move forward in small increments. We may well ask ourselves, "What can I do better today than yesterday? How can I be of greater service to others? What can I do right now

that is good and worthwhile?" Even if we seem to be physically confined, we can be moving forward, actively caring for others, and vigorously reaching out to God. So often the windows of healing are opened when we put aside excessive introspection and insist on caring for others. There is always something we can do to be useful and kind.

Let's not consent to uselessness. At every moment, all of God's ideas have a purpose. There is no decline or decay in the value of God's children. Sometimes in our thinking, we inadvertently make room for a belief in decline and loss of worth. To be thorough, to be truly scientific, we can realize that divine Mind never authors or tolerates even a belief in decline. Decline, decay, weakness — it's all error, and error, even a belief in error, must never be accounted as real.

The Christ shows us that the realization of Truth is always actualized. Understanding the presence of God always brings changes. Let's accept that there is no gap between seeing and being. There may be a large chasm between saying and being, but there is no distance between real seeing and being.

Each of us has an eternal, spiritual identity. We really do. We may only realize this once in a while, but that doesn't mean that it's not here. The Bible says, "Ye

...Thomas C. Aaher, C.S. of Sacramento, at the Fern Lodge Annual Meeting

are not your own" (I Cor 6: 19). It's not up to us to say who or what we are. God defines us. God forms us. God maps out our path. He hasn't made us responsible for outlining His creation. He doesn't place me in charge of saying who "I am."

Let's be careful of what we say after the words, "I am." Instead of affirming, "I am tired, I am old, I am discouraged," let's realize, "I am who God says I am. I am satisfied. I am at peace. I am strong. I am thankful." The textbook warns, "Your decisions will master you, whichever direction they take" (S&H 392:22).

If our advancement seems slow, perhaps we are devoting too much of ourselves to material thoughts and pursuits. We probably don't have sinful priorities, just mistaken priorities. *Miscellaneous Writings* steers us in this direction: "He advances most in divine Science who meditates most on infinite spiritual substance and intelligence" (Mis. 309:11-13).

There is a cross to be taken up. We must confront evil. We must look it in the face and pray fervently to understand its nothingness. We must labor and yearn to find the reality of God's care even in the midst of seeming struggles. Most of us know what this combat is like. It can be rugged duty, but it is work that must be done. We can realize that omnipresent good can't be absent. We can realize anew that divine Love can never be unloving or impractical. Evil is not what God has for man.

No matter how steeped in discouragement we may feel, God's care has a way of reaching us and lifting us out of the darkness. Our labor is not in vain. Inevitably the light dawns on us. I recall several years ago coming home late one cold afternoon feeling particularly overwhelmed by a series of challenges. There on our doorstep was a box, a gift from a family friend. It was a set of Winnie the Pooh plates and cups. Our little boys were so thrilled that you'd have thought it was Christmas. In my heart, it was Christ-

mas, for all the clouds of burden and discouragement broke up before the spontaneous kindness of our friend's care.

So often a simple deed of generosity, the gentle touch of a hand, or an encouraging word, means everything to a struggling heart. When caring for others we don't need to saturate ourselves or others in the letter of Science. Mrs. Eddy once said: "I have striven earnestly to have my students speak in a language which would be understood. It is not right for one to say to a poor sufferer, wracked with pain, 'Nothing ails you. You have no pain. You are not suffering.' I have said to students making this mistake, 'The next time you visit a patient tie a string to your tongue,'" (Tomlinson, p. 109).

I remember an occasion, early in my practice, when I could have used that string. A patient came from out of town to visit my office. Prior to her arrival, I compiled a list of references and inspiring ideas that I was sure would lift her up and out of her problem. Then I walked over to the bus stop to meet

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her bus. We spent a wonderful hour speaking words of truth. Later she wrote saying that her healing had come, and there was one thing that had really helped to snap her out of her belief... that I had cared enough to meet her at the bus stop. This simple act of courtesy had reminded her of God's love more than all the inspiring references and profound ideas I had assembled.

Perhaps healing is more connected to our actions than we recognize. As we live with increasing honesty, purity, and unselfishness, won't this be a healing animus? Our Christian Science treatment is validated by our loving treatment of those in our family, church,

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and neighborhood. If we truly realize God's care, we can't help but fill our days with expressions of care.

I'm not suggesting that we don't need profound insights into spiritual truth, but these insights need to be manifested in acts of patience, courage, and charitableness. Such deeds undergird whatever the caregiver might be led to say.

Several years ago there was an editorial in the *Christian Science Sentinel* (May 23, 1988, p. 29-31), titled, "Healing is not a talking cure." He writes, "Whatever the length of time involved in a healing's coming to pass, the actual basis for healing is not verbal persuasion or even gradual education; the basis remains the spiritual and scientific fact of divine, all-inclusive reality. Because the reality doesn't include

vice. Let's realize the presence of health, instead of lifting up the seeming complexity and legitimacy of illness. Simple realizations of truth, and tender, joy-filled humanity are powerful healers.

To conclude, let's think about this admonition from the book of James: "My beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (*James* 1:19).

We want to be slow to wrath. It's so easy to be impatient with a store clerk, angry at another driver, upset at a church member, annoyed with a spouse, maybe even critical of a fellow caregiver. When impatience or criticism sneaks up on us, let's see this as a call to respond to divine Love. We can realize, that is, understand and actualize, God's gentle care. We can be slow to blame others, slow to think sarcastic thoughts, but quick to see man's authentic sinless nature.

And let's practice being slow to speak. Let's step out of the high speed hustle bustle of our times.

Let's turn off the matter chatter of the media. Let us speak gentle words, —words of the heart, words of truth and love. Let us keep alive our "tender words and Christian encouragement" and steer clear of the "talking cure."

Finally, may we be swift to hear. May we have those "eager ears" that Hymn 58 talks about. May we be swift and eager to listen to God, and to freshly feel His continuing love for each one of us. May we be on fire with the realization that God's care is gentle, God's care is practical, and God's care is perpetual.

Let us speak gentle words, words of the heart, words of truth and love.

disease, pain, or evil, but only God's goodness, the recognition of this can bring a very different sense of things into human experience." He adds, "While prayer may indeed bring to light for patient and practitioner habits of thought that need correction, healing as understood in Christian Science isn't a talking cure, a psychological probing of personality, or a pressing for confession of sins. Even if Christian Science treatment seems required over a period of time, it nevertheless has its solid basis in prayer that quietly recognizes and responds to the one Mind, God, instead of being a busy activity of the human mind."

As family members, church friends, nurses, and practitioners, we don't need to become more and more entangled in others' personal backgrounds and flaws. Long conversations, detailed examinations of character, these may sometimes amount to mental malprac-



From the Administrator — George Strong

Mary Baker Eddy wrote the following message to a meeting of her church in 1899. “Brethren, our annual meeting is a grave guardian. It requires you to report progress, to refresh memory, to rejuvenate the branches and to vivify the buds, to bend upward the tendrils and to incline the vine towards the parent trunk,” *Miscellany*, p. 125. Isn’t that a fine guideline for the 1999 Fern Lodge annual meeting.

Facility occupancy has increased from a low of 9 patients earlier in the year to 16, and we are ready to accept more when we have sufficient nursing staff to provide care. Thanks to generous gifts we have completed some of the much needed repairs and improvements to the buildings. We replaced the cabinets and counter tops in our kitchen, prepared three nice apartments to be used as short-term lodging by nurses who come to work at Fern Lodge, and provided a place for nurses to have their meals and to pray and study during their breaks.

We are grateful for all we’ve been able to do, and yet we remember our Leader’s reminder that progress isn’t really indicated by appearances, but rather “The purification of sense and self is a proof of progress,” *Science and Health*, p. 324. The staff and board work together, sharing a monthly metaphysical topic to focus prayer for our work and the facility. Nurses encourage each other to meet the false sense of self, human personality, wherever it may appear, —in themselves, their coworkers or patients— and to master the false sense with the true idea of Man, the image of divine Love, as Christ Jesus demonstrated it, right here and now.

Speaking of friends and fellow Christian workers, Mrs. Eddy wrote, “Memory, faithful to goodness, holds in her secret chambers those characters of holiest sort, bravest to endure, firmest to suffer, soonest to renounce,” *Pulpit and Press*, p. 5. This is an opportunity to refresh our memories of the faithful workers who have done so much on behalf of Fern Lodge and to give special thanks for those who have served as Directors of Nursing, Emily Valentine, Camille Lindsay, Pat Alvarez, and now Sharon Strong.

There are so many more memories we could refresh, and we invite you to recall your connection with Christian Science nursing and Fern Lodge and to hold your memories, as Mrs. Eddy says, “faithful to goodness.”

It is our sincere desire “to rejuvenate the branches and to vivify the buds.” We pray to cherish, protect and preserve the dedication of those workers on our staff who have been a part of Fern Lodge through many challenging years. And we pray to welcome, nurture and encourage the inspiration of those who have joined us more recently to share their nursing qualities at Fern Lodge.

Each of us must prune away the deadwood of character traits that are not Christlike so man’s true nature can grow, blossom and bear fruit in our practice and in the details of our daily lives. Christ is “the way, the truth and the life,” and Christ alone can refresh us when we’re tired, restore our confidence and our courage, animate and enliven our expression of “God’s preparations for the sick,” which Mrs. Eddy identifies as “potions of His own qualities,” *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 268.

Mrs. Eddy’s requirements for the annual meeting include the demand “to bend upward the tendrils and to incline the vine towards the parent trunk.” Though nursing has long been identified with women, it is clear that the qualities of true womanhood are expressed by men and women alike, so the following statement of Mrs. Eddy’s indicates a need for us all, “This period, so fraught with opposites, seems illuminated for woman’s hope with divine light. It bids her bind the tenderest tendril of the heart to all of holiest worth,” *Miscellany*, p. 258:6-9.

To “bind...the heart to all of holiest worth,” and to incline the vine —our nursing ministry— towards the parent trunk —towards the mission of Christ and the true idea of Church— this is our prayer, and it is the purpose of the messages we share at each Fern Lodge meeting and in every issue of the *Fern Lodge Focus*.

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instead "God pours the riches of His love into the understanding and affections," (*S&H*, p. 5). Our hearts are filled beyond measure and we simply must, as Hymn 139 puts it, give of our "heart's rich overflow."

We are deeply grateful to the many individuals, branch churches and other organizations, like Fern Friends, who give of their hearts' overflow and offer metaphysical and financial support for the mission of Fern Lodge.

It is so important for us to remember that God provides abundantly for all of His children. When a patient comes to Fern Lodge we pray to realize that he or she comes whole and complete. A child of God does not lack health, strength, clarity or resources.

Rather than putting a demand on our inspiration, energy or finances, each patient contributes to our understanding of God's provision of these very qualities—to nurses and to patients. The study and prayer of patients, practitioners and nurses bless all of them, and all nurses recall instances in which a patient has offered them a helpful, healing thought.

God always cares for man, and His means are infinite. We are happy to share with you the need for benevolent giving. Many patients at Fern Lodge continue to need significant financial assistance, and we could not serve these deserving individuals without the donations we receive each month.

If you would like to know more about how you can contribute in support of Christian Science nursing at Fern Lodge, please call 510-886-2448.

Later in the year Fern Lodge will offer seminars on practical Christian Science nursing that can be held in communities throughout northern California. We love Christian Science nursing and cherish its contribution to individual salvation and healing. Spiritual strength, inspiration and joy come with helping others who rely on prayer for healing. Most nursing work is relatively simple and every practicing Christian Scientist can quickly learn to provide assistance that can make a real difference in someone's life. Please call for information, and look for an announcement soon.

Fern Lodge Focus — April 2000

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