



Fern Lodge Focus

June 1998

*Repent and be baptized every one of
you in the name of Jesus Christ for the
remission of sins, and ye shall receive
the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Acts 2:38

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Before they call, I will answer...

This winter's weather brought challenges to Fern Lodge, including flooding and falling trees. Throughout this time we experienced that assurance from the Scriptures, "before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear," (Isaiah 65:24). From the preparation of a place to stay and meals, through the removal of the mud and the trees, our needs were met by divine Love in the most generous and timely ways. Our gratitude to God and to the many loving friends and strangers He provided to help us is boundless. We have a debt that can be repaid only by our continued benevolence and labor on behalf of Christian healing.

Monday, February 3rd, after several days of steady rain, our creek overflowed. In less than half an hour there was water coming in under the doors in the living rooms and patient rooms, and soon water was about 18 inches deep all around the back of the building. This happened at about 11:00 at night. The Fire Department answered our call, and we saw that neither the patients nor the building were in danger, but it was plain that we would not be able to care for the patients, nor do an adequate job of cleaning up, as long as the facility was occupied. The Fire Department team worked with us to find suitable quarters for patients so we could evacuate the premises. They located an old fire house, now owned by a local church, only about a mile from Fern Lodge. They arranged and assisted with the transportation, and the grace, gentleness and care they expressed gave ample evidence of Mrs. Eddy's statement, "tenderness accompanies all the might imparted by Spirit."

By just after 3:00 in the morning all patients were tucked into bed in their new, temporary quarters, and not long after that all were sleeping peacefully. During the early morning hours the question of how to provide meals for patients came up, and it was answered by the Red Cross, which delivered all meals for our entire stay away from the facility. For the next two days our nursing staff came to the fire house to care for patients, and it was a time of inspiration for us all. All the details of care which we may have taken for granted had to be rethought for this new situation, and the harmony with

which the staff and the patients worked is a sure testimony to their prayers, their reliance on God to meet every need, everywhere.

At Fern Lodge we worked to get the facility back into livable condition. And as we worked a large retaining wall behind the Hillside building failed, bringing broken timbers and mud sliding against the building. But again, neither the facility structure nor the patients were in any danger, and we gave thanks. Several volunteers came with sandbags and made sure the creek would stay within its banks. A tractor was hired to scrape mud, which was more than a foot deep, from the parking lot. The volunteers then pushed, mopped and swept mud from every room. On Wednesday a professional crew came and did a more thorough cleaning, and we readied the building for patients. Our staff and volunteers did the moving this time, and that night all the patients were back in their beds, in their rooms at Fern Lodge.

Saturday of that same week two large trees by the creek fell. They were tall enough and large enough to have done a great deal of damage to the building, and they fell directly onto the roof of the wing that had been flooded just a few days earlier. The only damage to the building was to about 10 feet of gutter, and there were no adverse consequences as a result of the high voltage lines being crossed and downed. A professional arborist happened to be visiting a family member just across the creek from Fern Lodge. He removed the fallen trees from the roof, and the patient rooms, which had been evacuated for the second time, were ready to be occupied again by morning.

We can think of no better way to describe what happened than what follows: An angel of God came down and told three high-voltage electric lines to catch the trees, and the angel told two power poles to lean slowly toward each other and lower the trees gently onto the roof so that nothing would be harmed; and it was done as the angel commanded.

The enclosed flyer tells the cost of clean up and repairs. Thank you for any help you can give.

The Power of the Holy Spirit — Mary Jane Chapin

In February Fern Lodge sponsored a Bible talk, *The Acts of the Apostles*, presented by Mary Jane Chapin, a Bible scholar from Minneapolis, MN. This program was inspiring and thought provoking, as the previous presentations she has given for Fern Lodge also have been. The following is taken from portions of the all-day seminar which offered many more valuable insights into the early Christian church, insights which are helpful for us today.

The Acts of the Apostles is a powerful rendering of the work of the Holy Spirit—how God is working in the world—told through the lives of a small, devoted group of people who allowed themselves to be inspired and controlled by this Spirit. They were totally committed to bringing people to God through their understanding of Christ Jesus. In that mission, they were of one heart and mind, and their strength and vigor led to a spirit-filled Church. The impact of this little group cannot be overstated. They will amaze us, delight us, inspire us. But they might also prick our conscience.

When we consider their work, let us do so with several questions in mind. Has the power of that Holy Spirit changed, diminished in any way? Or is it awaiting another receptive heart, willing worker, devoted group? Might not the Spirit be standing by to infuse something equally powerful and unusual into our hearts and minds? What might that mean for us? With that in mind, let us begin our story. And let us allow those fresh winds of heaven to blow through these words, to blow right into us.

Fifty days after Passover, which was when Jesus had been crucified, was the celebration of Pentecost, a time for all Jews to gather, to pray, and to give thanks. When that day came, the believers in Christ Jesus were all together in one place. We have no reason to think this was limited to the eleven remaining Apostles, the group included all believers up to this point, well over one hundred people. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole

house where they were sitting. The word for wind is *pneuma*; it is also the word for Spirit. It does not say that there was a violent wind raging through the house. It talks of a sound that came suddenly, precluding any natural explanation for it. Moreover, it came from heaven, from on high, indicating its divine source. It was meant to assault their ears, to place them on alert for what they were about to see.

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And what they saw were tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them, a tiny little flame hanging above each person's head. The noise was indiscriminate, filling their ears with sound, but these little tongues of fire were individual. And all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. Each one received the same measure, whether male or female, young or old. Later this filling will be referred to as a baptism, a pouring out, or a receiving. Clearly this is meant to fulfill the prophecy in Luke 3:16, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

But what actually happened? Hadn't the Holy Spirit been present all along? Of course it had. Wouldn't it always be present? Of course it would. Yet this moment signaled a change. Hereafter these people were empowered to go forth, to speak with boldness, to take the gospel message far and wide, and to withstand many hardships. Yes, there would still be lessons to learn, challenges to confront, progress to be made. Yet, in these efforts, they would be guided by the holy Spirit, led into a fuller understanding of all truth.

The Power of the Holy Spirit (continued)

A little later Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer, and a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple, where he was put every day to beg. Peter looked straight at him saying, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you." The apostles had no riches of their own, but they were about to share something more valuable than any material wealth. They said, "In the name (authority) of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." And instantly the man's limbs that had been crippled since his birth were made strong, and he jumped to his feet and began to walk.

Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God as a testament to his gratitude. No doubt he would have followed those disciples anywhere, yet it is God that he praises. He got it right. The image is one of unbridled joy. His behavior was a witness for others. The people saw him walking and praising God. They knew who he was, the man who sat begging at the temple gate. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. They recognize the healing that has occurred and are impressed with it without having a clue what it represents. Now Peter will help them understand the significance of the sign they have just witnessed.

The crowd was, no doubt, staring at them as if they were divine men, possessed of great power. Peter asked, "Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" It was not them, but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who has done this. They are not the source of the power, it is simply God's power working through them. These events have been set in motion because the God of our fathers has glorified his servant Jesus.

Triggered by the healing they had witnessed, Peter's words made a great impression upon the crowd that had

gathered around. This aroused the ire of the priests, the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees who came up suddenly to Peter and John while they were still talking. These leaders were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming the resurrection of the dead in Jesus, the same man they had condemned to death. The leaders seized Peter and John and put them in jail. The next day the rulers, elders, and teachers of the law met and had Peter and John brought

before them for questioning, "By what power or what name did you do this?" "This," of course, refers to the healing of the man.

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Jesus had promised that when the disciples would be brought before such authorities, they need not worry about defending themselves because the Holy Spirit would teach them at that time what they needed to say, (see Luke 12:11f). So Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly began, "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple, if you are asking how he was healed, made whole, saved, then I'll tell you, you and everyone else in Israel." The statements are rhetorical. Of course that's why they're being held...for doing a good work for a needy person.

Contrast what they have done as a kind deed with what the leaders have done to them. Ultimately, the issue will become who is best suited to lead God's people. Right now, however, the answer to their question is that the work is done by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead. Their role in Jesus' death is made explicit and their actions stand in sharp contrast to what God has done. It is plain that they are in opposition to God.

Turning to Scripture to reinforce his arguments, Peter says that Jesus was the stone which the builders rejected, which has become the capstone. The builders

were none other than his audience, the established leaders of Israel. Having rejected the stone as worthless, unfit, they must now realize that God has taken that very stone and made it the cornerstone, the very foundation of the building. Implicit in this is an appeal for them to stop their rejecting and to recognize that Jesus has been totally vindicated through his resurrection.

Needing time to think, the rulers met behind closed doors, asking, "What are we going to do with these men?" Peter and John had broken no law by healing the man; to punish them for their good work would raise the ire of the entire community. On the other hand, they had to do something to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people. "This thing" is obviously the preaching of the resurrection, the call for repentance, and the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah.

The leaders must avoid a large breach between themselves and the people. Their final decision shows the weakness of their position: "We must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name." The ban was intended to be complete and final.

But Peter and John appealed to a higher court, asking them to judge for themselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey humans rather than God. When commands conflict, whose will should be disobeyed — the will of God or man? Even the Sanhedrin would have agreed that obedience to God stands above obedience to the state. The course open to the disciples is clear and openly defiant: "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

As soon as they were free, Peter and John went back to their people and reported everything to them. The first thing they all did was to raise their voices together in prayer demonstrating the oneness of spirit. There

were no recriminating words against the court, not even a hand-wringing over their decree. They begin by turning to God, saying in effect, "Lord, You are God, Creator of all." They acknowledge God's powerful, complete control over everything.

They petition God to consider the threats and enable "your servants to speak your word with great boldness." They pray for the strength to move forward, to keep on witnessing, to continue preaching the word. "Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." The place where they were meeting was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. Their hearts and minds were replenished.

Now there was no attempt at hiding, discretion, or secrecy. Day after day, in the temple court and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

They filled that city with the good news about the Messiah. They will obey the voice of God and not of humans, guided as they are by the Holy Spirit. They obviously have the support of the people. In many ways the leadership of the people has shifted from the Sanhedrin to the apostles.

Some time later (see Acts 12) King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church and had James, the brother of John, put to death. He seized Peter too, and placed him under strict security. "But the church was earnestly praying to God for him." The night before his trial, Peter was safely in his cell, sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and two more soldiers stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel appeared inside the cell and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

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The Power of the Holy Spirit (continued)

Peter followed him out of the prison, but he wasn't sure what was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. He and the angel simply passed the guards, and when they came to the iron gate it opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they were out in the open air, suddenly the angel left him. That's when Peter began to realize what had really happened, how powerless human efforts really are in the face of divine power.

Despite superhuman efforts to provide the best security, the angel led Peter to freedom, unscathed and unhindered. When this dawned on him, he went to the house where many people had gathered and were praying. He knocked on the door. A maid came to answer and recognized Peter, but she left him standing out there while she ran back to the others saying, "Peter is at the door!" Now, despite their prayers, they started to argue with the maid, telling her, "You're out of your mind." Peter continued to knock, and finally, they answered. The text says, "they were astonished!"

This is a most interesting comment on prayer. Think about this. What do you think those people were praying for? Might it have been for Peter's deliverance? Herod already had James killed; the threat was real. But when their prayers were answered, they were all too willing to deny it: It can't be! But it was.

Peter will pretty much disappear from Acts following this escape, but he certainly does go out with a flourish! His experience surely highlights the power of God to overcome all opposition to His plan. Throughout history God has been able to rescue His People. He has even saved Peter before. This time, however, the irony goes beyond the bewilderment of the guards and authorities. A significant part of this story emphasizes Peter's disbelief; he thinks he's dreaming all this. Later

on, the church that had been earnestly praying cannot believe the outcome either. It is irony with a twist. Normal human expectation cannot thwart divine action either. It will be a powerful lesson for the burgeoning church, and for us as well, to keep in mind.

There is a bittersweet ending to the book of Acts. Yes, the movement will continue on, increasing among the Gentiles. But there is no joy in knowing that the

message of salvation was rejected, time and again, by those to whom it was first offered. In that sense God's purpose has not yet been fulfilled, that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God," (Luke 3:6). A salvation that was intended for "all people...all nations." Until that promise has been accomplished, we can know that the Holy Spirit remains irrepressible, that it is powerful and present and effectively working within each willing heart. We can all pray to let that heart be ours.

Mary Jane Chapin
February 1998

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A key element in our growth Spiritward is the Christian virtue of grace. In the chapter on *Prayer* our Leader tells us, "What we most need is the prayer of fervent desire for growth in grace, expressed in patience, meekness, love, and good deeds," (*Science and Health* 4:3-5). And in *Unity of Good* (14:12), Mrs. Eddy emphasizes that "Christians are commanded to *grow in grace*." When we fervently desire something we show a great zeal for it. But what is grace, that we should fervently desire it, to grow in it?

Grace is an influence emanating from God which acts for the spiritual well-being of His beloved idea, man. It is the mercy of God, His free gift to man for his redemption. Grace, then, is a powerful, regenerating influence which must be expressed by man as the reflection of God. This grace of God is given freely to man without condition or reservation. So should be our expression of love in Christian Science nursing! As we grow in grace, divine Love appears through each of us showing us how to love patiently, meekly, unconditionally.

Christ Jesus demonstrated the capacities of man when the grace of God guides thought and action—human will *yields* to the divine. To love with the grace of our Great Exemplar is the daily work of a Christian Science nurse. This love acknowledges God as the source of all good, unfolding infinite patience, ever-present love.

Patience, meekness, love, good deeds are modes of grace found in Christian Science nursing. These qualities require us to express our Christly selfhood, free from judgement, criticism or personal sense. Sacrificing a false sense of self, with its human opinions about what a patient should or should not do to be healed, is laying down our lives for our friends. "This is my commandment," says Jesus, "That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," (John 15:12-13).

In order to serve others the nurse must have a heart filled with this *greater love* that is selfless, pure, meek, charitable, willing to be a healing influence in the lives of others. Peter tells us to "have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins," (1 Peter 4:8). The love that fills the nurse's heart is the charity which "beareth all things" that Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 13. The Greek word rendered "beareth" means "to cover with silence." What a precious sense of love! It can silence all claims of mortal mind, whether they appear as sin, sickness, disease, or discordant relationships. Reflecting the love of Love, God, in our lives we answer the call of those in need with calm patience and meekness.

Patience endures hardship or inconvenience without complaint, bears offenses without anger or revenge, and perseveres with calmness and self-control. Patience is poise; it does not react. Meekness, akin to patience, is modest, humble, unpretentious, unassuming. It shows gentleness and softness of temper. It is not proud or self-sufficient. Meekness submits to the divine will. Our Master says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls," (Matthew 11:28-30). Expressing meekness is satisfying because it restores our soul—our spiritual sense, our identity as God's children.

Mrs. Eddy speaks of the influence of grace in healing when she writes, "A little more grace, a motive made pure, a few truths tenderly told, a heart softened, a character subdued, a life consecrated, would restore the right action of the mental mechanism, and make manifest the movement of body and soul in accord with God." (*Miscellaneous Writings* 354:15). A nurse who prays fervently for grace selflessly yields to Love's control of every detail of her work. Growth in grace makes her care tender and kind, and it does much more. Grace imbues the nurse's work with the healing power of God.



He shall give His angels charge over thee...

These much loved words from the 91st Psalm have been more precious to us than ever this year, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." During the winter storms we experienced wonderful instances of God's angels watching over us, protecting us and guiding us in His paths to safety and harmony. In this *Focus* you will find a more complete account of what happened and a summary of the costs we incurred as a result.

Reporters came to the facility, and Fern Lodge was front page news. Photos of the fallen trees and brief comments from staff and patients were printed in local papers. Most surprising to the reporters were the patients' responses. Instead of calling the experiences disasters or dangerous, the patients' comments, to the reporters and the staff, ranged from describing the events as minor inconveniences to a genuine gratitude for the adventure.

One patient's comment that was printed thanked the Fire Department, and expressed a sentiment shared by many, "They took us to the church, but I wouldn't be afraid to go anywhere with them." Others described the events to reporters as "a bit of an adventure," and one patient even asked if we could do it all again soon. We were grateful for

the opportunity to thank those who helped so much and to acknowledge God's constant care for all.

Our most heartfelt thanks go to all the loving supporters who responded so promptly at the time. Some who live in our area came to help, many others offered their prayers, and several gave financial assistance to get us started with the clean up and many necessary repairs. All through February and much of March we worked to get the facility back to its usual order and cleanliness.

The first week in March we were inspected by The Commission which accredits Christian Science nursing facilities. The accrediting team was very pleased with the condition of the facility, especially in light of our experiences just one month before they came. They gave us their highest recommendation, a three-year accreditation, with just a couple of specific items needing attention, including having a *Journal*-listed nurse on duty at all times.

The work we have done involved considerable cost, and we ask for your assistance in this area. Please see the flyer enclosed with this *Focus* for a more detailed accounting of the work that has been completed and that which remains to be done.

Fern Lodge Focus — June 1998

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