

We hope you will join us at the Fern Lodge Annual Meeting

Sunday afternoon, October 21 at 2:30

*First Church of Christ, Scientist, Danville
650 Danville Boulevard*

Jeanette Smith, C.S. from San Clemente, CA

will share ideas on the topic

“Ye see your calling, brethren...”

1 Corinthians 1:26

Jeanette Smith is in the public healing practice of Christian Science, listed in *The Christian Science Journal* since 1992. She has been active in the Christian Science movement in many capacities, including virtually every office in branch church work and as workshop leader for the Northwest Regional Youth Meeting and the WWW2K—Sunday School Meeting 2000. She has served on behalf of The Mother Church as Reading Room Field Manager, and Field Program Manager. Jeanette has had a poem, articles and an interview published in Christian Science periodicals, and she has addressed several associations of pupils of Christian Science teachers.

We are grateful for Jeanette’s keen awareness of the vital role of nursing in the healing mission of Christian Science and the important place of Christian Science nursing facilities in our movement and in our communities. She brings firsthand understanding of the joys and challenges of facility work from her service on the Board of Directors of Sunrise Haven, a Christian Science nursing facility in Washington state. Recently she joined the Board of the Christian Science Nursing Care Endowment, based in Southern California. We are looking forward to the insights and inspiration she will share.

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Gratitude, inspiration, progress and plans—how you can help

The board, staff and patients at Fern Lodge join in gratitude for everyone who contributes in support of Christian Science nursing. The cost of providing care is rising, and we ask for your ongoing assistance.

Fern Lodge gives Christian Science nursing care for those who need it, in spite of the fact that many patients are not able to pay the full cost of the services they receive. We are glad to be able to continue this benevolent policy, and we are grateful for the assistance of all who make it possible. We write to keep you informed about the benevolence needs of patients and the financial requirements for operation of our facility.

It has been about a year since Fern Lodge discontinued participation in the MediCal, the state welfare program. We have realized a marked difference in how we think and talk about payments for Christian Science nursing care. In the past we may have asked if a patient had few enough funds to qualify for MediCal. Now we ask everyone involved in a case, including the patient, his or her family, the practitioner and Fern Lodge, to bear witness to God's supply. We know that divine Love's resources meet every human need; what does it look like this time? The answers to this question are wonderful to witness.

A few patients have been able to pay a larger portion of their charges than they expected. Sometimes payments are made after a patient leaves the facility and then is able to find the funds. In other cases we have seen family and friends of patients work together to increase their financial contribution to pay for the care given at Fern Lodge. Although in most cases there remains a need for substantial financial assistance, we are grateful for every effort made by patients to pay the cost of their care.

There still is a great need for contributions to assist those who cannot pay for nursing care. During the first six months of 2001 Fern Lodge gave over \$250,000 in benevolence. We have been able to give financial assistance and make much-needed repairs and improvements to the facility thanks to generous monthly donations and a substantial bequest we received last year.

Our work, in all our activities, starts from the standpoint of wholeness, perfection and abundance. God, Love, the infinite One and All, meets all human needs, and we are grateful for the daily demonstration of this fact, grateful for love expressed toward us and for our ability to reflect divine Love in our service to mankind. What about the concern that there is insufficient supply to fulfill our service to God and man? Mary Baker Eddy, in *Science and Health*, wrote, "There is to-day danger of repeating the offence of the Jews by limiting the Holy One of Israel and asking: 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?' What cannot God do?"

The lie of limitation, in whatever forms it takes—too little money to pay for care, too few nurses to give it—is an offence to God. Lies have no foundation in fact and no reality nor power to determine our experience. Through steadfast reliance on the tender care of our Father-Mother God, we have been brought through many challenging times, and we meet today's challenges with gratitude and with joyous expectation of progress in our understanding of infinite Love. In her short article, "Angels" (*Miscellaneous Writings* 307:1-5), our Leader assures us, "God gives you His spiritual ideas, and in turn, they give you daily supplies. Never ask for tomorrow: it is enough that divine Love is an ever-present help; and if you wait, never doubting, you will have all you need every moment."

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Adam and Eve — excerpts from a talk by Mary Jane Chapin

The book of Genesis is filled with contradictions, but instead of these being just evidence of the various sources, they might be deliberate literary devices intended to make us think harder.

In Genesis 1 we read, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:" To begin with, the word for "man" in this instance is 'adam,' the same word for "man" used in the second chapter of Genesis. It is a collective noun meaning humanity, or people in general. It does not have a sense of gender. God is saying that all of mankind is made in his image. Every attribute of God is ours by reflection. Our lives bear witness to God's activity in the world. Part of being created in God's image and likeness is having a share in God's work of caring and dominion. God has entrusted man with stewardship of the earth.

From this first account we learn that everything we have was given to us, not earned by us. We should have a healthy respect for all life and take our stewardship seriously. God is in charge here. It is God who set everything in motion and surely He can continue to care for it. After all, it is we who are made in God's image, not the other way around.

Most scholars see the beginning of a second story of creation in Genesis 2:4, "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." It is unusual to find the words "Lord God" paired. There are those who claim that the second author wanted to make sure everyone knew they were describing the same God so they made the connection between Yahweh and Elohim. It is possible, however, that if the first chapter focused on God, the sovereign, transcendent Being, and the next two chapters focused on mankind with a personal God, the effort was made to connect these two ideas. The names were placed side by side to indicate that God is both transcendent and personal. This is not meant to confuse us, but to comfort us.

Man is the crown of God's creation, the one who shares in God's care over His creation, as well as the one who is totally dependent upon God, who is clay in His hands. In continuing to demonstrate His care for man, God gave him a safe place to live. This garden had all kinds of trees in it. Two trees in particular are singled out for special mention. The first is the "tree of life" and the other is "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The Lord God said, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

One interpretation is that this was the beginning of man's moral development, that now he had the capacity to reason and to make moral decisions. One might say

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that he was forbidden to eat from this tree because whenever man starts making his own decisions he gets into trouble. Such decisions should be left to God.

Man's life should be complete, but it seems that man is lonely, and God comes up with a solution. God says, "I will make a 'something' for him." Woman was created to be that "something." The Hebrew word is *ezer*, which has been translated as "helper." Does "helper" imply a subordinate position? In Genesis 1 God created man, male and female. They were both given dominion; they were treated in exactly the same way. In Genesis 2, did God create the woman to be in an inferior position, to be a helper for the man?

Well, God is an *ezer* too (see *Psalms* 33, 121, 146 and *Hosea* 13, for some examples). Does anyone wish to attribute inferiority to God? The fact is, along with being *ezer* to man, the woman is an *ezer* corresponding to him. That word "corresponding" obliterates any sense of

the man's superiority, and it reinforces the conviction that the woman is equal to him.

One recurring theme in this story has to do with human maturation. The text says, "the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." The word for "dress" typically means serve. Man is to serve and keep the garden. Reading these words in Hebrew, however, can lead to a very different meaning. Hebrew words have different endings, indicating if they are masculine, feminine, or neuter.

The Hebrew word for garden is masculine, but the "it" in "dress it and keep it" is feminine. The ground that has been mentioned is feminine. The ground outside the garden is feminine. Later on God will send the man

The serpent asks, "Did God say, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" This is the first question in the Bible. Up to now, the man and woman have done exactly as they have been told, but now here is a question. Life is different now. The woman is required to think. This question was addressed to the woman but with a plural pronoun, "you," so the man is obviously included as well.

The serpent has brought temptation into the garden. But the serpent does not "tempt" the man and woman. Never does he say, "give it a try and see what happens." He asks questions and make statements. He merely lays out the possibilities and then waits to see what happens.

A close and unbiased look at the serpent's statements reveals some inherent truth. First, he said they

would not die. Without looking too far ahead, we know they didn't, at least not immediately. And the serpent made several other claims as well. He said their eyes would be opened. In 3:7 the text says, "And the eyes of them both

were opened." The serpent said they would become like gods, that's affirmed in 3:22 as is his claim that they would know good and evil. In these last two instances, it is God who affirms this change.

The serpent had said their eyes would be opened so we expected that, but we thought it might have to do with new insights, the ability to make independent judgments. But what they now know is that they're naked! Some scholars think the primary sense of nakedness has to do with someone being stripped of their defenses. Perhaps the new insight of the man and the woman had to do with realizing for the first time that they were vulnerable. They have been struck by their humanness.

And did not the serpent say that they would become like gods (like parents, perhaps) if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? The story of Genesis, then, chronicles the maturation process. One

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out of Eden to dress, or serve, the ground from which he was taken. That ground isn't inside the garden. In all three instances the word for "dress," or "serve," is the same. Wouldn't it mean that yes, God placed man in the garden, but his job was going to be to serve and keep the ground outside of the garden. It suggests that man's time in the garden was always intended to be temporary.

Now, let's acknowledge that the process of leaving may be hard. Isn't it helpful to have someone facilitate the process? Some scholars suggest that the serpent was the facilitator for Adam and Eve. Now, it might be too hard for us to even think of the serpent in any positive way. But isn't it the serpent who asks the first question, who suggests that they think for themselves? Scholars don't think the idea of the serpent being evil developed until the Intertestamental era. So how would it have been seen before then? Serpents are often seen as being wise and cunning. Even Jesus instructed his disciples to be "wise as serpents."

symbol often associated with trees is that of growth and maturation. It is a symbol of life, with its cycle of shedding leaves in the fall and renewal in the springtime. Two trees are especially singled out for mention. The tree of life has little meaning for a young child, a child believes he will live forever. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil in this case involves knowing these opposite forces. Eating of this tree begins the process of maturation, of growing up.

The serpent then embodies a catalyst. He asks the first question; he stimulates independent thinking. The snake knows what eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil will bring. He tells the woman the fruit will "open her eyes," raise new possibilities. The couple will have adult awareness. Like an adolescent, she does not fully think through the possible consequences. She sees that the fruit is a delight to the eyes and would be good to eat. She does not consider the downside of eating it. Eating the fruit is the rite of passage from childhood to maturity. Dealing with the serpent is the first order of business. Hereafter the serpent will represent the contrasting aspects of life.

First and foremost, this is a story about choices. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. Some scholars see this as a metaphor for moral development. How might we think about this story using moral development as a parameter? One message in Christ Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is that we are not to judge others (Matthew 7:1).

Let's assume that we have been trying to practice this maxim. We read about Adam and Eve and see the idyllic scene. Then the serpent comes along, and everything falls apart. It's easy to make judgments. We don't want to be like them; we want to be as separated from all of them as possible. But in so doing, not only have we judged that the serpent was "bad," but that Adam and Eve were "bad," too. Doesn't this seem counterproductive to our goal of not judging others?

How about instead of trying to distance ourselves from them, we put ourselves in their shoes. They had a choice whether they were going to eat the fruit or not. Our choice can be whether or not we choose to stand in judgment. Our decision to judge others leads to a lot of unnecessary pain and heartache. But let us remember that according to this story, we have a choice. Suppose we decided to exercise this choice and not judge others.

God loves you just the way you are. And He loves everyone else too, in just the same way. We don't have to judge others, or ourselves, for that matter. We have nothing to be afraid of or ashamed of, and certainly have no warrant for any sense of arrogance. We can know that each of us is exactly what we were created to be!

Being in the garden is the time when we choose not to judge, but to accept others.

Any sense of competitiveness can just fall away, and we can support each other's growth towards our full potential. Being in the garden, being in paradise, is the time when we choose not to judge, but to accept others and to see them as God sees them—beautiful and lovable. The Genesis story enables us to go to the root of some of those pitfalls of life, and it provides a step in the direction of healing. It might be the beginning of living in the kingdom of God!

Judging Adam and Eve, however, is still a step away from the real issue. The real issue is that they disobeyed God. How might we think about that? The fact is, all of us have been tempted, and maybe some of us have also disobeyed God's commands. It is at this point that we should be forever grateful that Adam and Eve did not die. Suddenly we find that it does no good to try to distance ourselves from the players in this story, because in the deepest way, we are like them. Then what we see in these second and third chapters is a case study of how

Adam and Eve (continued)

someone might be led to disobey God and what the consequences are of such an action.

Although the serpent never really tempts the couple outright, its words set in motion a process that leads to the same result, and the couple is now confronted with thoughts they never had before. On the one hand is the goodness of God; on the other hand is the promise of a better life and fulfillment. What kind of a choice is that? It's the thought that by doing what is not to be done, life will be better, more enriched, more fulfilled.

That brings us to the aftermath of the deed and the fact that they did not die. Doesn't it give us hope for ourselves too? But the reverse is true, too. What keeps us from sinning with impunity if death is not immedi-

fill us with God's promises. First, God gives to us; then we are asked to do God's work, to share what we've been given, to use those blessings in the commands. When things don't go well, when we stumble or fall, or lose our way, we go back to the blessings to get filled up again. The blessings enable us to *do* the rest of the Sermon.

I'm wondering if there isn't a similar pattern for the creation stories. In a deep way the first chapter of Genesis is filled with absolute truths about God and His holy creation. It presents a true picture of God's perfect creation. He spoke and it was so; creation is complete, harmonious, and good. As we ponder these facts, these truths about God and His creation, we have the tools to venture forth, to experience relationships, maturation, and moral development.

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ate? God's prohibition still stands. We must come to terms with the idea that death has many faces. We might still be walking around, but something in us dies when we sin. We have lost our innocence, purity, and trustworthiness.

We have examined this story to better understand the nature of relationships, maturation, and moral development. Part of the way I have been able to come to terms with this story, to find a sense of peace with it, is to realize there probably isn't *one* right way to interpret it. It is multi-faceted, and that's part of its intrigue.

But before we finish, I would also like to comment on the thought that the first chapter of Genesis is more spiritually based, and that everything that happens afterwards is all downhill, misty, and mired in muck. In some sense, I am reminded of the patterns found in the Sermon on the Mount in the gospel of Matthew, chapters 5 through 7. There the Beatitudes come first. They

With that story under our belts, we enter the world oftentimes encountering lives that look more like the story told in the second and third chapters of Genesis. We have choices and sometimes we

don't make wise decisions; we might even do what is wrong. Or we have to choose between the lesser of two evils. Sometimes there will be unhappy consequences, and we might want to hide. Life can be hard, disappointing. But we don't have to lose our way.

That first chapter of Genesis is still there. We can go back and start over, reaffirming the truths learned there. We can get right with God and with all that He created. Once we're back on track, we can venture forth again, thus learning from our experiences. Then we can go back out into the world and do better. This is describing a process, and in this process we, hopefully, will find a good sense of progress. We can depend on this, resting in the assurance that we've been made in the image and likeness of God. "And God saw all that He had made. And it was good."



How you can help (continued)

The cost of operating Fern Lodge has risen sharply in the past year. Through energy efficiency measures we cut our electricity use by over 20% and thus qualified for a 20% reduction in our bill for electricity, but still the monthly cost of gas and electricity has nearly doubled. An even more dramatic increase in cost is in our facility insurance. The cost of facility insurance, including liability, will rise this year to about \$12,000. In addition we will pay workers compensation insurance premiums of about \$65,000. We also now pay more for water, trash collection, telephone service, food, and nursing and maintenance supplies.

For Fern Lodge to continue to fulfill its mission of providing Christian Science nursing care, it is essential that we are able to pay for the goods and services we use. It is equally important that we share both our love for nursing and also our understanding of the nature of care and the vital role it plays in Christian Science healing and in our Church.

The demand for nursing care has increased steadily in recent months. But it appears that there are too few Christian Science nurses to meet the needs of all who seek Christian Science nursing care. On some occasions we have been able to bring nurses from other areas to help meet patient needs on a short term basis, but we are actively seeking more permanent solutions to the apparent shortage of nurses.

Every day we pray to be receptive to God, to discern the spiritual ideas that flow freely from divine Mind. And every day we strive to act in ways that demonstrate our trust that Mind's ideas furnish Love's supplies to fully meet each day's demand for care and service. For instance, recently, when we were praying to understand God's care for His children, a young woman and her mother from a distant country contacted us to ask about

Christian Science nursing. We assisted them to come to the United States, and these two dedicated, loving individuals are now on our nursing staff.

Fern Lodge has an active program of instruction and training for Christian Science nurses. We are happy to assist those who seek to put into practice their love for their fellow man. Classes and individual instruction are available for those who are just beginning to nurse, and for experienced Christian Science nurses who would like to improve some aspects of their work and gain new experiences that will help them be better nurses.

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All of God's children have the capacity for expressing divine Love in caring for others. This spiritual idea supplied the impetus that led to our Care Workshops that are offered for branch churches in California. The aim of these programs is to help church members see and demonstrate their own ability to provide assistance for others in times of need, helping branch churches in their expression of care and helping to minimize the need for institutional nursing. Workshops in Carmichael, Chico, Santa Rosa and Oakhurst have been well attended and much appreciated by

those who participated. More workshops are planned in other communities.

If you would like your branch church to sponsor a Care Workshop or if you are interested in learning more about Christian Science nursing, please call Sharon Strong, Director of Nursing, at 510-886-2448.

Once again we thank you for your encouragement and support, and we ask for your continued participation in Fern Lodge's mission to provide Christian Science nursing care for those who need it.

Come for a visit, and share in Fern Lodge activities

Have you come to Fern Lodge recently? We hope each of our readers will pay us a visit and take a tour of the facility. When you visit you will see some of the many ways in which you can be active in support of our Christian Science nursing activities. Patients and staff members all appreciate the contributions made by volunteers at Fern Lodge.

There are many things to do here, and your talents are sure to find an outlet. Perhaps you like to read to individuals or groups, you may have pictures to show and stories to tell, or maybe you love to garden. We will be happy to have you share your inspiration and your skills. Please call and tell us how you would like to take part in our caring work.

Right now we need readers to conduct Sunday services and Thursday testimony meetings. These meetings are special times for the patients and staff here, and the readers who have come to Fern Lodge over the years can tell you of the inspiration they have gained from their participation.

The Sunday service can begin in the morning between 11:00 and 11:30 or in the afternoon between 2:00 and 3:00. The testimony meetings on Thursday usually begin at 2:00 in the afternoon. Please consider coming to conduct a regular service at Fern Lodge. We will be deeply grateful and we're sure you will be greatly blessed by the experience.

The Fern Lodge library is missing some bound volumes of the Christian Science periodicals. If you know where we can obtain the following volume numbers (not years), please contact us:

C.S. Sentinel: 1, 2, 3, 23, 24, 84 (part 2) C.S. Journal: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 14, 27, 38, 39, 61, 64, 69, 85, 93

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Fern Lodge Focus — September 2001

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