



## FERN LODGE FOCUS — NOVEMBER 2019

This has been a delightfully busy year at Fern Lodge. Our annual summer childcare program, FLOCK, recently wrapped up, and we said goodbye to Zack, who did a wonderful job with the children. Work has continued at the Redwood Community facility in Santa Rosa, and we are near the end of remodeling. The Fern Lodge Christian Science Nurses Training program has been more active than ever, with courses held at Fern Lodge and other Christian Science nursing facilities. And we have welcomed a number of new Christian Science nurses to our staff, including our dear friend, Deborah Messmer, who has taken on the responsibilities of Assistant Director of Christian Science Nursing.

During the busy times it's easy to get completely caught up in the daily activities, demands, and opportunities. So we find it of vital importance to take the time to remember and remind each other of our purpose and mission, our ministry, the reason for Fern Lodge and for the Christian Science nursing services we offer.

Our purpose is to heal. It's that simple, really. And it's that important—to those we serve, to ourselves, to our church, and to the community where we live and work. Fern Lodge is a place where Christian Scientists come together to practice and bear witness to the healing power of God in the demonstration of Christian Science. Those dear people who come to us for care and assistance are blessed by and grateful for the healing touch of the loving, skillful, reassuring, spiritual touch of the Christian Science nurses on our staff.

“Every step of progress is a step more spiritual.” Mary Baker Eddy made that arresting statement in a sermon, which is published in the slim volume, *The People's Idea of God — Its Effect on Health and Christianity*. The growth of an organization and its staff, the improvement of its buildings, its activity in teaching, may be seen as progressive steps. But unless these activities are undergirded and characterized by a deeper spiritual understanding of them, they do not indicate real progress. We at Fern Lodge are committed to spiritual growth and progress. In our daily work—our conversations, the care and activities we provide for patients, our meetings, the instruction and mentoring in our training program—we strive to think and act from a spiritual standpoint and to encourage and support each other in this progressive work. We are grateful to see this commitment bear fruit each day. We are deeply grateful for the healing we witness and for the loving and generous support for our work that we receive from so many of you who share our devotion to Christian Science healing.

With gratitude and affection,

George Strong,  
Administrator



## CHRISTIAN SCIENCE NURSES' TRAINING, BY SHARON STRONG

We have been overflowing with joyous activity in classes! From February to June 2018, we taught a Level 1 class with ten Christian Science staff at Twelveacres. The administrator and an office member also attended all the classes, making it an even dozen!



**The Twelveacres class**

Metaphysical foundation-building, word research, ethics, and practicing skills together formed the basis of each class. It was rewarding to see thought change from the idea of giving care to providing Christian Science nursing care, seeing perfection right where various impositions seemed to be.

In the last twelve months, we have taught five one-month classes, each with four or five students. Two Level 1 classes were taught within weeks of each other, and one class each of Levels 2, 3, and 4. Two special classes on practical guidance for those preparing to serve or newly serving as Directors of Christian Science Nursing were taught, and one supervision class. A total of 21 students were enrolled. Fifteen students took one class, four took two classes, and two took three classes. Of the 21, eleven were from other facilities, and six of the eleven attended via Zoom. Eight are currently working at Fern Lodge.

Statistics aside, we have had the best 18 months of meeting dear Christian Scientists and training them in the skills and ethics of comforting and nursing others in Christian Science. It has been such an honor to share an expanding view of divine Love, the essence of Christian Science nursing, with these aspiring and inspiring individuals! For those participating over Zoom, we found creative ways to give workshops and speeches. For one

facility's annual meeting, we made a short video on how we worked remotely with that facility.

We are so grateful for our mentors, Mina Soriano, and our newest addition, part-time mentor Deb Messmer, who helped students transition from the classroom to the Christian Science nursing floor, and assisted with fine-tuning the qualities and adapting the skills learned and practiced in the classroom. In the summers of 2018 and 2019, I mentored three Christian Science nurses at a camp for Christian Science children. These two-week sessions are wonderful opportunities to see many quick healings of children and staff, and they provide the added benefit of working onsite with Christian Science practitioners.

We have seen a big uptick in applications and hiring from Africa, and feel so blessed by the qualities of love and joyous, dedicated service each one brings to our healing mission. When we realized the sincere desire each one has to serve the healing Cause of Christian Science in this way, it is indeed humbling.



**The Fern Lodge class, now on our staff**

We regularly hear of those whose hearts have been yearning to love and care for others, but the lack of payment for these services in other countries makes Christian Science nursing unavailable as a career within the Christian Science movement there.

I am so grateful for the love, nurturing, and practical wisdom bring expressed by students and staff alike.



## WELCOME DEBORAH MESSMER!

*We are happy to welcome Deborah Messmer to our staff. Deb received her Christian Science nurses training at Broadview, Inc., in Los Angeles and trained Christian Science nurses. She was also served as Co-Director of Christian Science Nursing there. She worked for Broadview for 9 years until her family moved to the St. Louis area in 2015 where she worked at Peace Haven Association as their full-time mentor in the Christian Science nursing education department. Her family's desire to return to California prompted their move to Castro Valley in August and she began working here at Fern Lodge as our Assistant Director of Christian Science nursing.*

One staff member asked me recently what my hopes are for Christian Science nursing. My hope is that the standard of Christianity, including love, joy, peace, support and encouragement, permeate every spot where Christian Science nursing is in action.

Mary Baker Eddy says, "Christian Science and Christianity are one" (*Science and Health* 372:17-18). I love that, because it turns me to the examples of Christianity in the Bible. As Christians, we love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind, and we know that we cannot truly love God without loving our brother, our neighbor, co-worker, grocer, mechanic, etc. (I John 4: 20-21). Christ Jesus specified that we are to love everyone.

That can take a lot of work sometimes. At one point in my career, I worked for a company where I was feeling severely judged by others and found myself frustrated with my co-workers. As a Christian Scientist I asked myself, "How can I love them?" After working to muster up a sense of human love for each one and then finding myself frustrated over and over again, I took a new approach.

There are Christian qualities that I grew up learning about in Christian Science like peace, patience, listening, love, joy, and tenderness (and others too!). Some people find these qualities easy to express toward some, but difficult to express toward others. I believe cultivating the qualities that are more difficult for us to express and striving to live them, allows us to love and heal. As I practiced naturally expressing the quality

of peace every day, I found my thought was more open to what my co-workers were saying. Expressing patience helped me not react to anything negative going on around me. Love, joy, and tenderness allowed me to be gentle with the

people who had previously frustrated me. All of this changed how I approached my relationship with them. What I thought were irreparably broken relationships suddenly began to heal and we were able to find more common ground and worked together better. Some even told me they appreciated my approach to my work.

Mary Baker Eddy talks about the word "learn" and illustrates the way to loving our neighbors. She says in *Science and Health*, "If we would open their prison doors for the sick, we must first learn to bind up the broken-hearted" (S&H 366:30-31). This implies that we don't already know how to do it. Often, we think of others as the "sick" and "broken-hearted," but I realize that it was my own feelings of hurt that made it difficult for me to love. Once I focused on my own thinking and learned how to express peaceable qualities, the situation turned around and my relationships were restored.

When I arrived at Fern Lodge I noticed and was deeply impressed with the harmony the Christian Science nurses, staff members, volunteers, and families express in working to support our patients and each another. I attribute it to the way of Fern Lodge. There is a true sense of Christianity, joy, and love expressed here and everyone associated with Fern Lodge feels it, knows it, and responds to it.



## REPORT ON REDWOOD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN SCIENTISTS

Since Redwood Community became a nonprofit in 1997, it has been an important place in the Christian Science community in Santa Rosa, CA. It was formed through the prayer and demonstration of local church members to address their needs. It was a demonstration in the spirit of the Biblical verse: "...be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren..." (I Pet 3:8). In the time it was open, Redwood Community not only took care of 4-5 residents, but also served as a Christian Science nursing resource for the community.

Redwood Community has been closed for the last two years. When they reached out to Fern Lodge to see if we could be of assistance in reopening Redwood Community, we were happy to so, as we recognized that this community resource should continue its activity at this time. While Fern Lodge will be assuming the administrative duties of Redwood Community, such as payroll and accounting, the two organizations will remain separate legal entities. Before reopening, it seemed like there was a wonderful opportunity to do some necessary remodeling and reorganization of the building to make nursing easier for our Christian Science nurses.



**Newly remodeled bathrooms meet the ADA standards and our nursing needs.**

Around the same time, we were happy to welcome Jane Mercereau to our board, who served as the Administrator of Redwood Community for many years. Her knowledge of Redwood Community

has proved helpful to both the board and staff. In addition, we are grateful for the work of Jan and Seth Dempsey, who have continued helping out Redwood during its inoperative time.

Our main remodeling to date has been to put in an entirely new and open kitchen space as well as remodeling two bathrooms for greater patient accessibility. We have also added a bedroom with a bathroom to create an apartment for a live-in Christian Science nurse. We have also taken the opportunity to freshen up the place with a new coat of paint and new LED light fixtures throughout the building. For safety, the wooden deck has been reinforced and a new fire alarm system put in place. Future plans include landscaping and creating a wheelchair accessible ramp into the building.



**Our new kitchen and dining area will be a primary gathering place with plenty of light.**

At this time we already have interest from some Christian Science nurses to work here and some patients to reside here. We will open as soon as we have enough full-time Christian Science nurses willing to staff this facility. If you are interested in learning when admission will be available or working or volunteering at this facility, please give Fern Lodge a call at 510-886-2448.



## GETTING TO KNOW OUR VOLUNTEERS, BY ROBIN BARBEN

*Marsha Lutz is a volunteer at Fern Lodge and she says her main goal is to make people happy, to give comfort, and to make someone's day a little better. So what drives a woman who, among many, many accolades, was a three time All-American Champion in diving, was the first female inducted in the U.C. Davis Athletic Hall of Fame, played in over 35 U.S. National Golf Championships, and was a worldwide Military racquetball champion, to volunteer twice a week for 5 1/2 years?*

"I love moving, sports and activities," Marsha says, "and I love sharing that love with others." Marsha is the Fern Lodge champion at taking residents for walks or wheelchair rides up the hill, and she shares her love and understanding of nature along the way, and the patients always come back smiling and refreshed. She also leads a movement class at Fern Lodge, where residents rediscover that movement is natural with God, because that's where all movement originates.

"When I first came to Fern Lodge, I wanted to find out more about Christian Science and why it was so important to my Mom. Because of Christian Science she had a wonderful life and I wanted that same kind of life. It ended up changing my life. I learned here that God really does heal. Between the reading of the *Christian Science Journal* and *Sentinel* articles, and Lectures which I read weekly to the residents here, and the prayers I received from a nurse when I had some challenges, I have seen many healings. I am growing, and learning to be a better person. One day after a nurse, a dear friend, prayed for me, I noticed on the way home that some tumors I had on my face had just vanished."

The clarity that Kathleen, Donna, and I all saw on Marsha's face that day (and since then) reflected a clarity that is springing up spiritually within her.

It's a softer touch, a sweeter love, a compassion and kindness, which were already there, but are finding a deeper daily expression in fulfilling the needs of others.

When I first met Marsha, I was aware of her military background, (she served in the Air Force for 13 years), and I saw how her leadership qualities were very helpful in encouraging residents to come to activities. But what I have learned lately is to appreciate her achievements in the military in a more spiritual way.

Knowing that she was the first female assigned remote duty (in Turkey), the first female to command a squadron, the first female director in the Strategic Air command, and the first woman to lead air traffic control operations in the Pacific air forces, opened my eyes spiritually to the qualities she was expressing. She had demonstrated strength and excelled in a culture where women were fighting to be recognized.

Marsha often has told me, "The feeling I get when I come to Fern Lodge is 'this place is love.'" She said, "Although I

have a had a tremendously rewarding life, there is more to life than personal achievement. It didn't make me a complete person. When I am at Fern Lodge, I feel I am contributing. Nothing is as rewarding as helping people." That's why we are here: to help each other, and to learn to love.



**Leading a movement class**



**Kathleen and Marsha with a friend**

## ZACHARY VANDERMUDE, A LETTER FROM OUR 2019 SUMMER INTERN

My summer was much different than I expected. This internship has exposed me to many different tasks, so a word of advice for someone looking for an internship at Fern Lodge—stay open-minded. Fern Lodge has many opportunities.

When I arrived in California, I was thrown into a new environment. The West Coast is a completely different culture and climate than what I was used to. This difference was smoothed out when the Operations Manager, Brian Stock, graciously picked me up from the airport and treated me to a great lunch. Brian pretty much established a precedent I saw again

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**Everyone at Fern Lodge is friendly and willing to help you. The amount of love I felt made it very easy to start my summer on a good footing.**

and again: everyone in Fern Lodge is friendly and willing to help you. The amount of love I felt made it very easy to start my summer on a good footing. Before the kids came for FLOCK—the Fern Lodge summer daycare program for staff children—I did some other maintenance project to keep myself busy. I refinished a bench, removed ivy from a garden for a fence repairman, and painted one of the rooms. I was extremely grateful for the minimum amount of supervision and for the trust from, Brian and Ben, the Maintenance Supervisor. Brian and Ben are fantastic men. They will give you the supplies and guide you in the right direction. After their guidance, they will step away and let you work on the projects. This basic amount of trust let me work until the job was complete without micro-managing. And surprisingly, this works.

By the end of June, I was not working on these projects anymore, as the kids had finished school for the summer, and I was watching between 2-3 kids each day (and occasionally more). The kids are always energetic and need lots of attention and participation. The children require someone who is dedicated to making fun days, being patient, kind, understanding and sometimes willing to be strict

when necessary. I came up with fun ideas for the kids to do this year, some of them include making bubbles, legos, cars, hot wheel tracks, books, arts and crafts, marble runs, sports, and water guns.

I have loved this internship. Everything has been very enjoyable and Brian will work with you no matter what happens. I was sick two days this summer and Brian worked with me both times. You can expect the same treatment if you ever do an internship too. I recommend making the most of your time at Fern Lodge. The effort, thought, and kindness that I gave the kids they gave right back to me. Sometimes you have to give a little tough love, but the kids come around. This was a fantastic summer and time with the children provided me with a wealth of gratitude for this opportunity.

Thank you, Fern Lodge!



**Zach with one of the children from FLOCK**

## NEW TECHNOLOGY SUPPORTS OUR HEALING MISSION

“I held my little ‘pancake’ on my chest, which was reading to me *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. When I woke up the next day, I was healed. After being bed-ridden for more than two weeks, I stood up on my feet and walked out to attend the Easter church service at Fern Lodge. I can’t tell you how much inspiration I have gained from listening to my speaker every day. It opened a whole new world for me” —Testimony from a current patient

The “little pancake” from this patient’s testimony is what she calls Alexa, Amazon’s smart speaker, which was recently installed in every patient’s room. By using a third-party application, Fern Lodge was able to create their own playlists that play *Science and Health*, the weekly Bible Lesson, hymns, Daily Lift, Sentinel Watch, and other Christian Science-related talks and lectures. Patients can now listen to anything whenever they want to without any set schedule.

After taking down our old nurses’ call system, we no longer had the ability to broadcast content through pillow speakers. We know it’s important for patients at Fern Lodge to have access to Christian Science audio content in support of their healing demonstration.

“It was not an easy solution to reach,” Jamie Stock, who introduced Alexa to Fern Lodge, recalls. “I knew I wanted the patients to have a choice as to what they listen to and when they can listen to it. At first, I had trouble finding the most cost-effective and user-friendly solution. Then, it dawned on me that a smart speaker could do all of that if I was able to upload our own content. After hours of researching, testing, and programming, we finally found a way to make it work, while maintaining privacy for each patient. Introducing such a new device to every patient and Christian Science nurse takes time and patience. But I was amazed by how open and receptive everyone was.”

What Robin, our Director of Activities, loved most about Alexa is that, instead of tuning into audio programs at certain time, patients now have the freedom



**Little Alexa has the ability to play the Bible, Mrs. Eddy’s published writings, and all the wonderful audio content published by the Mother Church.**

to listen to whatever they feel inspired to at any time. That’s a huge blessing to those who are not able to leave their rooms to join group activities. God’s words and spiritual truth are an “ever-present help in trouble.”

“Besides Christian Science-related content, Alexa can also play all types of music, make jokes, tell the time and forecast the weather,” Jamie added. “One day, I passed by one patient’s room and heard her asking Alexa to play Frank Sinatra. As soon as the music started, her face lit up and she started to sing along. We sometimes take for granted the technology we use. For many residents at Fern Lodge, who have never used a computer in their life, being able to listen to their favorite songs really makes their day.”



# Fern Lodge Focus — November 2019

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## CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

### *“...HAPPY ARE YE IF YE DO THEM”*

In the gospel of John, there is a precious account of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. The story concludes, *“...after he had washed their feet...he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”*

In gratitude for the selfless service of the Fern Lodge staff, the Fern Lodge Board of Directors came to the facility and washed each employee's feet. It was a touching, tender, and sweet example of Love reflected in love.

