

August 2023

Fern Lodge

F O C U S

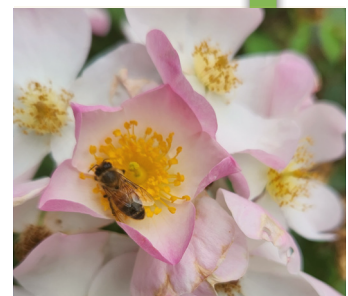


Welcome

Please Come In!



Fern Lodge has transformed through the years, but it's always been a home. We've seen a lot of change this summer, and we're so excited to share what's new along with snippets of the history that led us to today.



Come say hi!

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1984

The History of George at Fern Lodge

“When Jesus said ‘Love one another as I have loved you,’ that’s nursing!” - George Strong

Fern Lodge was founded and sustained with one guiding goal: to help those in need, regardless of who they are and what they have or don’t have. While the surface of Fern Lodge has changed – the buildings, the faces, the day-to-day – this underlying mission permeates every choice we make and direction we turn, and has since the beginning.

Fern Lodge began in a small house in Hayward when Mindell Fern Cox and her husband, Willard Cox, began providing care for Mindell’s mother. Seeing the loving service they provided, other church members approached them asking for help with their own elderly relatives. It wasn’t long before the Cox’s began looking for a more sustainable way to provide Christian Science nursing on a larger scale and bought the property where we now operate! At the time, it only held the house we currently use as offices and a Christian Science nursing classroom, but within a few years the first version of our main building was built.

Fern Lodge quickly began receiving more and more patients, and it was important to everyone involved that we be able to accept anyone that needed care, regardless of their financial situation. In order to gather the support we needed to accomplish this through donations and government funding, we became a non-profit in November of 1967.

In the 1970s, George changed the trajectory of his life. He came to Arden Wood to train as a Christian Science nurse, because he wanted to learn how to apply Christian Science in his daily life and how to use Christian Science to care for people. In 1978, he began working at Fern Lodge, joining a relatively small staff. By 1979, a trio had formed with him as the On-Job Training Instructor and Director of Training, Camille Lindsey as the Director of Christian Science Nursing, and Bob McVey as the Administrator. Together, the three of them created a slideshow about Christian Science nursing and traveled around Northern California, taking it to branch churches to give presentations. They wanted to spread the idea that Christian Science includes helping people. More Christian Scientists came to our busy facility and our staff began to grow.

At that time, Fern Lodge was not prestigious. But it was a place for people with no other option, and this led to Fern Lodge consistently operating at full capacity. George became administrator in 1981, and it soon became very clear that expansion was sorely needed.

During the 1980s, Fern Lodge maintained an inward focus. What did the patients need? What did the staff need? We wanted to be able to provide on-site Christian Science nursing training and a reputable standard of living. We wanted enough room for patients to live comfortably and happily. We wanted to preserve the feeling of family helping family in a warm home.

In 1983 and ‘84, Fern Lodge expanded the Hillside wing, then called Hillside House, which provided facilities, offices, and the well-loved Living Room Five. In 1985, we bought more property to eventually expand into the Treeside wing, which gave us a lot more space. We added a breakfast kitchen, and, for the first time, patients were able to have their own individual rooms.

Through the 1990s and early 2000s, George, the staff, and Fern Lodge Board of Directors focused on creating a space that was ideal for our patients care and the spread of Christian Science nursing. We’ve cultivated beautiful grounds, renovated and subsidized Christian Science nurses’ housing, and continued to adjust and build infrastructure as needed. While decisions have not always been easy, George and all at Fern Lodge have listened to God for the right path and focused on our values of providing loving Christian Science Nursing care to all who need it, spreading the fundamental spiritual ideas behind it to the community.

As he approaches almost fifty years working at Fern Lodge, George is stepping down as administrator, but will not be stepping back from Fern Lodge or its values. The work he will continue to do for this facility will strengthen the connections within the Christian Science nursing community and spread the reach of our care further to those who need it. George has been a fundamental part of Fern Lodge for decades, and he will continue to be a significant presence forwarding our mission. We appreciate his love and support in the next phase of Fern Lodge.



Spiritual Inspiration in our Community

We are so blessed in the Bay Area to be near so many churches and Christian Science communities. Come see what inspired lectures are coming up near Fern Lodge!

Date & Time	Lecture	Name	Place
Sun, Oct 1st 2:00 PM PT	Meaningful Change for Ourselves and the World	Mark McCurties	Menlo Park, California, USA
Thu, Oct 12 7:00 PM PT	A Spiritual Revolution: The Quest to Experience God	Giulia Nesi Tetreau	San Francisco, California, USA
Sat, Dec 2 2:00 PM PT	Learn to Pray and Heal (A Spiritual Adventure)	Nate Frederick	San Mateo, California, USA

For more information about these lectures and more, please consult www.christianscience.com/christian-healing-today/what-is-a-christian-science-lecture/find-a-lecture

A Warm Thank You For Your Donations



Last newsletter, we were recovering from a record-breaking storm that caused over \$100,000 of needed repairs and emergency prep. We are so grateful for all the wonderful support we received in donations of both money and time, as well as the kindness and well wishes. The outpouring of love was immense and much needed. Your continued support enables us to continue providing Christian Science care to our patients and will strengthen our neighborhood’s preparedness for such emergencies.



If you would like to donate, please contact us at (510) 886-2448 or on our website at <https://fernlobby.org/donation/>. You can also use the attached envelope or mail us separately at 18457 Madison Ave, Castro Valley, CA 94546.



Welcome, Brad!

Brad Stock has stepped in as our new administrator, beginning in early June. You can read the official announcement on the News page of our website

Fourth of July Party!

This summer we had so much fun throwing a big Fourth of July party! Organized by Robin Barben, our Activities Director, this event was a great time for staff, patients, and families to relax and enjoy good food and good company. Many people brought in food from their own home and traditions to share, and the kitchen staff provided fried chicken and tacos. We also had an incredible rainbow cake, baked and decorated by Tawny Vogt, which was beautiful and delicious. There was music, a photo booth, good conversations, and heartwarming speeches.

This party was also in appreciation for all the love, dedication, and service George Strong has given to Fern Lodge. After many years as administrator, George has stepped down. He has been a critical part of making Fern Lodge into what it is today, and we were glad to have this time to celebrate all he’s done and will do for the future outreach of Christian Science nursing.

There is a Fern Lodge tradition where George gives retiring staff a prism to remind them of the “rays of Truth”¹ and the “entire hues of Deity”¹ they reflect. In light of this tradition, at this event each staff member was given a prism in George’s honor.

It was such a joy to be able to spend time together and celebrate our family and the healing mission here at Fern Lodge.



¹ (Miscellaneous Writings 1883–1896, Mary Baker Eddy, p. 194:13)

George Strong: Matthew 25 and Christian Science Nursing

In my mid-20s, I began studying Christian Science. Yes, I had been to Sunday School for many years, and yes, I had been healed through prayer, but up to that time, I had not been an earnest student of Christian Science. After spending a few years in a rural community, however, I began to realize how much I had been blessed by the prayers of my mom and her friends. I felt strongly that I wanted to do something to repay a debt of gratitude to Christian Science.

Then one Christmas, my Mom and her friend visited me, and during a conversation one of them suddenly said “You should be a Christian Science nurse,” and I thought to myself: “That’s my answer.” Two months later, I was working as a Christian Science nurse at Fern Lodge. Soon after, I began training at a nearby facility. Three years later, I returned to Fern Lodge, was listed in *The Christian Science Journal* as a Christian Science nurse, and have been at Fern Lodge ever since.

What attracted me so strongly to Christian Science nursing? Well, nursing is a vital component of Christianity. For example, in the parable of the Samaritan, Christ Jesus describes the tender care given to a wounded man and the provision made for on-going care at a ‘facility’ for as long as this might be needed. At the end of this parable, Jesus told his followers: “Go, and do thou likewise” (see Luke 10).


Several years ago, I was wondering why Mrs. Eddy asked us, twice a year, to study the topic “Everlasting Punishment.” To my surprise, I realized that the phrase “everlasting punishment” appears only once in the King James Bible. In Matthew 25:46, we read: “And these [the goats] shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous [the sheep] into life eternal.”

Mrs. Eddy was a student of the Bible. Surely, she knew the source of the term “everlasting punishment.” Clearly, she chose the topics for the Bible Lessons carefully. So I asked: “What is it about Matthew 25 that merits our collective attention twice each year?”

The answer is simple. Matthew 25:31-46 presents us with a clear choice: we either help each other and thereby enter into life eternal, or we neglect each other “go away into everlasting punishment.”

In this key parable, Jesus speaks of a king who is separating the sheep from the goats. To the sheep, he says: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in.” The sheep are confused and ask the king when they did these things. He replies: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” To the goats, he then says: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire....: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.” The goats are confused and ask when they failed to do these things. The king answers: “Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.” The goats are then condemned to “everlasting punishment,” but the righteous are blessed with “life eternal.”

When Mrs. Eddy asked the Bible Lesson Committee to construct lessons on the subject “Everlasting Punishment,” did she know that she was requiring us to ponder twice each year Christ Jesus’ demand to help each other in practical, simple, humane ways? According to our Master, simple acts of kindness — giving food, drink, and clothes, taking in the needy, visiting those who are held captive — are essential to our salvation. Understood spiritually and put into practice, Jesus’ parable provides a simple model of Christian Science nursing. This is our salvation. We invite you to join us in this holy work.


George Strong



Letter from our Administrator


George and I have been discussing Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 25 for quite a few years. Recently, we have been asking: What would it mean to be a “Matthew 25 facility”? What would that commitment look like in practice? We have put together a short checklist that may suggest the essence of Matthew 25 in an organizational setting. The list is incomplete, but represents our conviction that the teachings of Matthew 25 should be put into practice here at Fern Lodge comprehensively, intentionally, consciously. Only in this way can we achieve the full potential of Christian Science nursing.

As an ideal, we believe a “Matthew 25 facility” should be:

- **Unswervingly Christian.** We will strive to ensure that our every thought, motive, deed is radiant with divine Love, that we imbibe the spirit of Christ, that we remain grounded in the teachings and demonstrations of Christ Jesus, that we are willing to give our all for Christ.
- **Committed to Christian Care.** We will strive to love each other in practical ways that meet the human need and lift each other Spiritward. Above all, we will strive to witness each other’s spiritual identity as a beloved child of God.
- **Dedicated to fellowship in Christ.** We will strive to live increasingly in harmony with God, His Christ, the Holy Spirit, and each other. This sense of Christian comradery, of brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ, is the essence of genuine Christianity. This true fellowship brings healing.

Several years ago, when speaking of Matthew 25, George said: “Feeding, giving drink, clothing, visiting, and comforting, all lead to salvation. This is nursing.” And humanly, this is exactly what Christian Science nursing is. However, Christian Science nursing is more than that — it is holy work. Ideally, the Christian Science nurse is filled with a love so clear that it has a healing effect, physically and morally. Our commitment to putting Matthew 25 into practice is a requirement of salvation. Neglecting our duty of Christian care opens the way to perdition. It is that simple — and that important. And that is why we at Fern Lodge are striving to become more fully a “Matthew 25 facility.”

To be clear: I strongly support Fern Lodge’s healing ministry and the contribution it has made over many years to our collective understanding of Christian Science nursing and an expansive sense of home, community, family, and care. My mother was a patient at Fern Lodge for about five years and benefitted greatly. My son worked here for ten years, growing humanly and spiritually. George Strong and I have been friends for over twenty years and collaborated on many projects, enjoying an expansive dialogue. I look forward to witnessing the next phase of Fern Lodge’s healing ministry and am grateful that George remains engaged with the work.


Brad Stock





Weeding Thorns and Removing Stickers

Anna Lisa Kronman

Every month the house Christian Science practitioner for Fern Lodge gives an inspirational talk for the Christian Science nurses. It was such a blessing in June to hear from Anna Lisa Kronman, who, besides being a board member, is a consistent presence amongst our staff and patients. Here is a summary of this talk and a list of relevant citations:

The intriguing title for this talk was “**Weeding Thorns and Removing Stickers**” and it was a very interactive talk, inviting consistent audience participation, both verbally and in writing.

“We’re going to begin where we want to end,” she said, inviting each listener to consider the ideal qualities they would like to see in their environment. Some of the responses included harmony, peace, joy, as well as seeing and feeling tangibly Love’s presence; warmth, comfort, safety; and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Then came the consideration of thorns and stickers that seem to pop up in everyone’s experience. These are a common biblical metaphor, mentioned over fifty times in Scripture! She read some passages that included thorns or weeds and asked her listeners to analyze what these intruders symbolized and what “spiritual pesticides” might be used to remove them. Then it came time for us to apply this to our experience. What thorns and stickers are we encountering? How can we mentally weed those from our thought? What passages from our textbooks might we think of right this moment to help in this weeding? She said, “It doesn’t have to be verbatim, but something that you know that is a **great eradicator** of mental weeds, of thistles and thorns.”

She then pointed out that when you want to remove weeds, you want the ground to be soft from rain, because the root will come up more easily. Similarly, if we are staying tuned to God’s messages, that is akin to keeping that ground pliable, so what is undesirable or mortal mind is easier to identify and remove. She asked the audience to define what qualities of thought could be hard ground and what could be soft ground.

She then read Jesus’ parable of the wheat and tears. She discussed how the farmer was patient until the wheat and tears could be separately identified. He wasn’t afraid, and did not condemn himself or blame others. He did correctly identify the apparent source: “an enemy”, or belief in a power apart from God. She then shared Mary Baker Eddy’s insight on it: “The temporal and unreal never touch the eternal and real. The mutable and imperfect never touch the immutable and perfect.” (SH 300:13). She gave a testimony wherein this passage was instrumental in healing a belief of lice, removing them from experience.

We ended where we began, embracing harmony, peace, and joy. The Kingdom of Heaven, she pointed out, is where thorns, stickers, weeds, and hard ground do not enter. “If we do notice those stickers in thought,” she concluded, “we can be like that farmer, bind them in bundles to burn them, not hold them close and say, ‘Oh, why do I keep doing this.’ **We can let go of them.**”

Thank you again, Anna Lisa, for these wonderful ideas. We’re always so pleased to hear your words of wisdom at Fern Lodge.

Relevant Citations

SH 590:1	Matt. 7:15,16	Isa. 55:10-13
Prov. 22:5	Matt. 13:24-30	
Prov. 24:30-34	SH 300:13	



A Vital Member of our History:

George Strong on Emily Valentine

Emily Valentine was the Administrator and Director of Christian Science Nursing at Fern Lodge, and she was my instructor in the ministry of Christian Science nursing. She taught me to look to God for the inspiration, understanding, and support I would need as I sought to be of meaningful service, helping those who needed daily practical support as they prayed for healing in Christian Science. Never before had I had the opportunity to learn from and work with someone like Emily. Her devotion to God and to the demonstration of Christian Science was rock-solid, pure, and unwavering, and at the same time, she had the most touching, simple, and patient respect and affection for the unique individuality of everyone—the patients we served, our fellow staff members, and the members of the local Christian Science church.

Emily had the unique ability to hold together in thought, conversation, and demonstration both the highest spiritual understanding of Life and Love, and the human kindness and practical skills that made the people she worked with feel loved and supported, never judged or condemned. She saw clearly that the Christian Science nursing care we were giving day by day was good and helpful, but that it fell short of the standard set by the healing works of Christ Jesus, but she had unwavering trust that through prayer and practice we all would make progress toward the high goal. I still have pinned to the wall beside my desk the following passage from Ezekiel, which Emily regularly repeated: “Thus saith the Lord...I will overturn, overturn, overturn...until he come whose right it is...”

After I had completed the training then required of Christian Science nurses, and with deep gratitude, I returned to work at Fern Lodge side by side with my first teacher and mentor, Emily Valentine. It was then I learned that Emily had been one of the earliest instructors of Christian Science nursing in the program started by The Mother Church. After several years as a Journal-listed Christian Science practitioner, she returned to Christian Science nursing, which she described as her first love and true calling, and she opened a Christian Science nursing facility, Valentine Haven, in San Mateo, CA. She retired from that work, but shortly thereafter the newly formed board of directors of Fern Lodge asked her to be their first Administrator and Director of Nursing. The loving and devout example secured for Fern Lodge the sound and enduring spiritual foundation on which the facility still stands today.



Valentine House, our housing for Christian Science nurses, named in honor of Emily Valentine.

Fern Lodge shares how fellow staff have made this facility feel like home:

“**Sharon Strong**’s example of Christian Science Nursing is truly inspiring to me. When she walks into a patient room, if there is a need, she fills it, if there is a comfort wanting, she gives it, her Light effortlessly fills the room with all the qualities of home. I am especially touched by the smiles she brings to the patients’ faces with her sense of humor. I never forget her example. After all these years, I still look to her daily expression of love for my own growth in grace.” - Anonymous

“The sense of family is very strong at Fern Lodge and expressions of brotherly love are a daily occurrence. In particular **Dianne Emery**, **Maggie Collins**, and **Ben Cahill** have shown kindness and care towards me above and beyond what I would ever expect from workmates. I also must mention our nurses from Africa who bring an added dimension to our family. What can I say? I absolutely love them! **Jared Onsabwa** and **Winny Isendi** are two that have shared a bit about their culture and themselves with me and I am richer for knowing them both.” -Anonymous

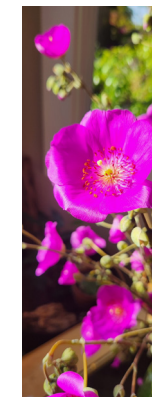
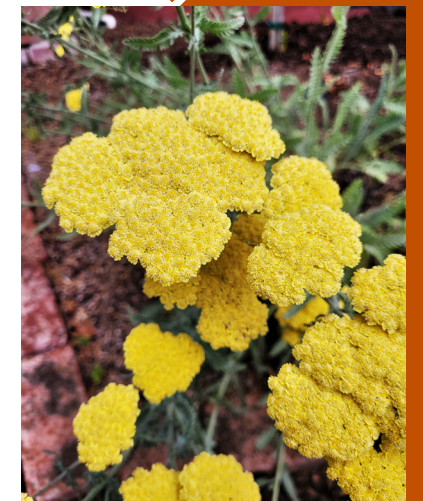
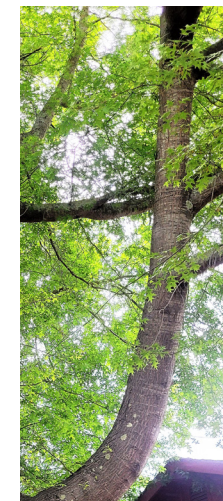
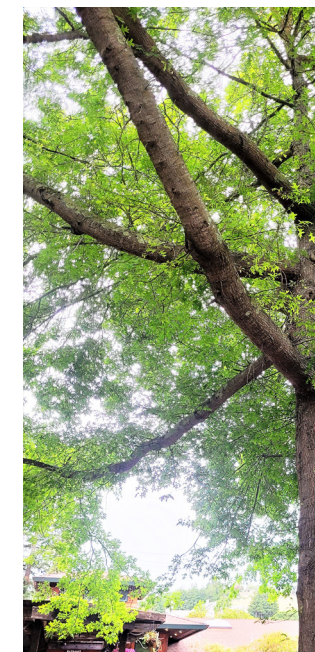
“**George** has been a wonder to work with. I’m grateful for the experience and for all the time he took to share his philosophies with me. He has changed the way I see and interact with the world.” - Allison Cook

“I would be surprised if anyone working or staying at Fern Lodge didn’t feel very much at home. **George Strong** made me feel at home from the start and still does. There are **so many people** who make me feel at home, it would take a page to mention them all. **Fern Lodge** feels like home to me because of all the love expressed every day.” - Dianne Emery

“One of my most inspirational colleagues has been **Robin Barben**, our Activities Director. From our early days together in the late ‘90’s at Fern Lodge, Robin has brought her love of God and man through her vision to provide healing activities for our patients. She’s carved out time, skipping her own lunch, to discuss and share inspiration with patients to send in a weekly letter to an incarcerated church member; she’s arranged annual picnics at local parks and taken individual patients out for lunch and van rides around town. In the midst of all of this, she became a Journal-listed Christian Science nurse. Robin is always keenly alert to the needs of the patients, and attends to them with such love and tenderness. Those experienced eyes and that tender heart are now providing on-job guidance for newer Christian Science nurses. She inspires me so much in her willingness to wrestle with a challenge to the max to gain a clear metaphysical solution. Robin, we love you so much! Thank you for bringing your light and your love to us!” - Sharon Strong

“Fern Lodge feels like home to me because you can feel the love and support from **each other** like a family. Our home is surrounded by **love**! Our facility is surrounded by **love**!” - Mina Soriano

Summertime at Fern Lodge



*“Home is not a place
but a power. We find
home when we arrive at
the full understanding
of God”²
Mary Baker Eddy*



Fern Lodge.

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“For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God”

Hebrews 3:4, ASV translation

