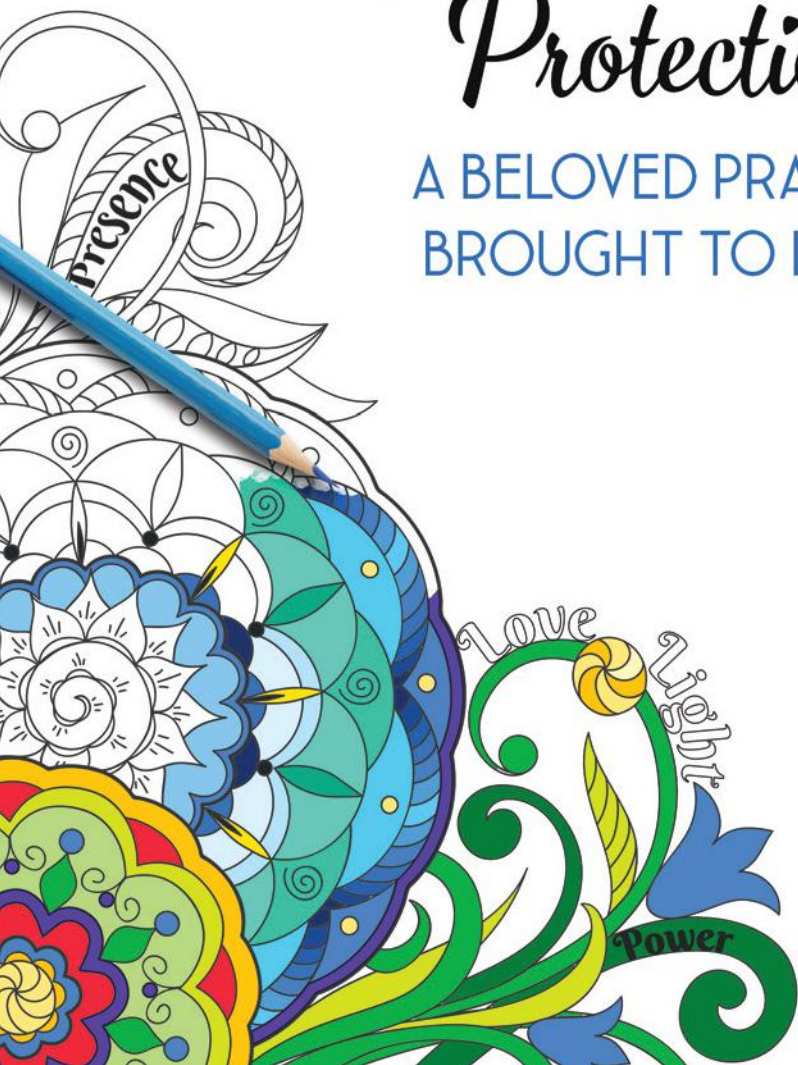


The Prayer for Protection

A BELOVED PRAYER
BROUGHT TO LIFE



Remember the “Prayer for Protection”
wherever you are



Remember the “Prayer for Protection”
wherever you are



Remember the “Prayer for Protection”
wherever you are



Remember the “Prayer for Protection”
wherever you are



Remember the “Prayer for Protection”
wherever you are



Remember the “Prayer for Protection”
wherever you are

Remember the “Prayer for Protection”
wherever you are

Remember the “Prayer for Protection”
wherever you are

Remember the “Prayer for Protection”
wherever you are

The “Prayer for Protection” is known and beloved throughout the world.

Not everyone knows the familiar prayer was written in 1940 by a Unity minister, the prolific author James Dillet Freeman, to address the growing war in Europe. We begin this booklet with his story of developing the prayer and his amazement as it took hold and spread. It even was carried to the moon.

Each section begins with a look at the prayer overall. Then our writers deconstruct the prayer line by line, recounting their experiences with light, love, power, presence, and their awareness that we can never be separate from God. This prayer has been a friend and teacher to millions with lessons that serve us all.

A few things to know:

- It’s the “Prayer for Protection,” not the “Prayer of Protection.”
- Freeman never tacked on the words “and all is well.” Given that the prayer was written in wartime—or viewing the circumstances of today—it’s easy to argue that all is certainly not well in our human experience. But the presence of God never wavers.
- The prayer was originally written as “me,” but substituting “you” or “us” is just fine.

We hope you find in this booklet a renewed appreciation for this memorable little prayer that has accompanied so many through their lives. May it serve you and bless you.

Your Friends in Unity

*The light of God surrounds me,
The love of God enfolds me,
The power of God protects me,
The presence of God watches over me.
Wherever I am, God is.*



Table of Contents

Writing the "Prayer for Protection" 4
James Dillet Freeman

The Light of God Surrounds Me 8

A Prayer of Connection 9
Rev. Christina Garza

Light at the Door 13
Rev. Edith Washington-Woods

The Science of Light 16
Blanche Kimble-Wilson

The Love of God Enfolds Me 19

Making God Personal 20
Rev. Saba Mchunguzi

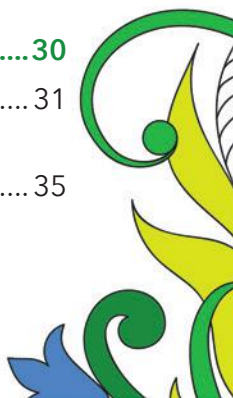
Experience the Love 24
Rev. Bronte Colbert

The Love of God Enfolds Me, You, Us 27
Rev. David B. Adams

The Power of God Protects Me 30

Praying Through Pain 31
Rev. Todd Humphrey

Never Without Power 35
Rev. Bill Englehart



The Inner Guide 38

Rev. Alberta Ware

The Presence of God Watches Over Me41

Adding the I AM Affirmations..... 42

Rev. Juan del Hierro

Practicing the Presence 46

Rev. Kurt Condra

The Gift of Presence 50

Rev. Karen R. Shepherd

Wherever I Am, God Is53

What Does a 5-Year-Old Know About God? 54

Rev. Ellen Debenport

Learning How to Be 58

Rev. Sandra Campbell

Coming Into Alignment 62

Rev. Elizabeth Longo



Writing the "Prayer for Protection"

James Dillet Freeman



*Let me tell you how I wrote the Unity
"Prayer for Protection."*

When World War II was raging in Europe, we received many letters and phone calls from people caught in the conflict, but for a long time we did not have a prayer for protection that we were all satisfied with. This is how one came.

The Silent Unity® Prayer Ministry had always written a special Christmas Prayer Service just for Silent Unity workers. And in 1940 I was asked to prepare this service. We had never before needed a prayer for protection, but in 1940 we needed one, so I wrote one to go with the Christmas service. What I wrote was a little four-line verse:

"The light of Christ directs me; the love of Christ enfolds me; the power of Christ protects me; the presence of Christ upholds me."

I had hardly finished this Christmas service before Silent Unity came to me again and asked me to write a protection pamphlet that we could send to people, so I did. It was called *His Protecting Spirit*.



AN EVOLVING POEM

I had written the “Prayer for Protection” just for Silent Unity, but now it came rolling up to the front of my mind and demanded that I pay attention to it. It enticed me to see what I could make of it.

First, I took the rhymes from it. I felt it would be more universally received if it was not a rhyme. Then I changed *Christ* to *God*. It had been *Christ* because it was a Christmas prayer, but I felt if we were going to send it around the world, *God* might be more acceptable to more people. So the little prayer became:

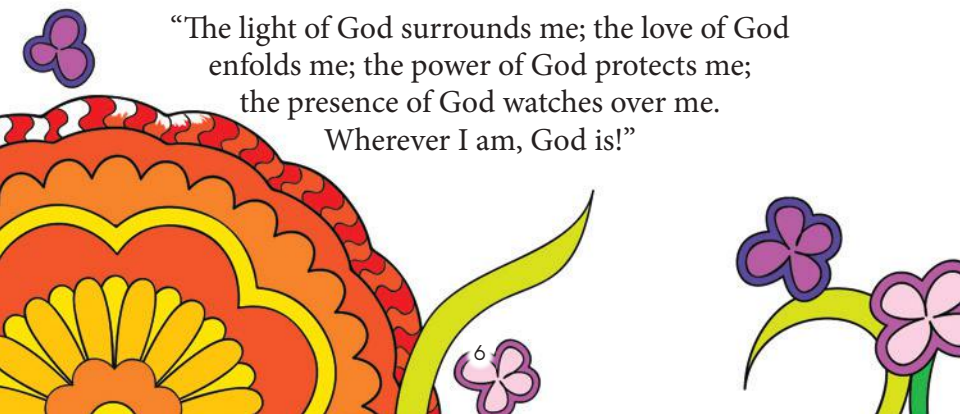
“The light of God surrounds me, the love of God
enfolds me, the power of God protects me,
the presence of God watches over me.”

That is the way we first printed it. Then a line came to me that I felt would make the prayer even more powerful. The line was:

“Wherever I am, God is!”

I added it as the fifth line. The “Prayer for Protection” first appeared as a four-line prayer in 1941, but when we reprinted it in 1943, it appeared in the form it has had ever since.

“The light of God surrounds me; the love of God
enfolds me; the power of God protects me;
the presence of God watches over me.
Wherever I am, God is!”



GOD'S MESSAGE OF LOVE

It is possible that no prayer Unity has ever printed has reached as many people as the “Prayer for Protection,” for not only has Unity printed it over and over, but almost every Unity church uses it to conclude its services.

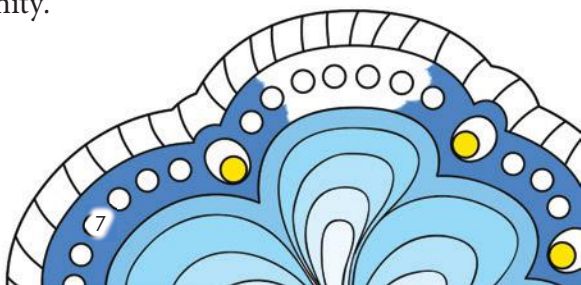
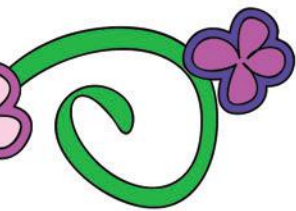
On the very first moon landing, on Apollo 11, astronaut Col. Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin carried the Unity “Prayer for Protection” with him. He did not know me or Unity.

It has appeared in hundreds of different publications that have no connection with Unity, and millions of people have carried it around on cards that fit into their pocketbooks, pockets, and billfolds. It has been translated into many languages. Sometimes it appears with me as the author. Often no author is given. Sometimes other people are named as the author.

It had been changed and changed again before it reached the form that it now has that best meets people's needs. This prayer is the product of much thought and concentration and of a mind that was willing to stay open to receive divine inspiration.

This article was adapted from a column that first appeared in Unity Magazine.

James Dillet Freeman (1912–2003) was an internationally acclaimed poet, author, and lecturer. Unity created a retrospective of his writings in a booklet titled I Am God's Song. He also wrote the book The Story of Unity.



*The Light of God
Surrounds Me ...*



A PRAYER OF CONNECTION

Rev. Christina Garza



I grew up on the South Side of Chicago with my grandmother, *abuelita*, who was from Mexico. She was from a devout Catholic family, and prayer was instilled in us from birth. There were several prayers she would pray each night with my brother and me, and we quickly learned them. I know those prayers to this day and passed them on to my daughter. Those prayers always made me feel connected to my *abuelita*, my family, my ancestral heritage, and they also made me feel safe, protected, and powerful. Growing up in a poor and oftentimes dangerous neighborhood in Chicago, those prayers were very much needed to weather the nights hearing fights, gunshots, and police sirens outside my window.

When I joined Unity almost 20 years ago, it was a difficult time in my life as I was experiencing loss, transition, and depression. I was in 12-step recovery and desired to live a more joyous and fulfilling life. I remember the first time I heard the “Prayer for Protection” and how it made me feel—that same sensation as my prayers as a little girl. There was something magical about the words that reminded me I was not alone and everything would be okay.

The “Prayer for Protection” has pulled me through some hard times. When nothing else made sense, when all seemed dark, that prayer brought me back to my God connection and to the light. It has saved my life on more than one occasion. It is my reminder of the power within me and around me when I am triggered and fear wants to reign supreme.

The prayer has become like a loyal and comforting best friend. You know the friend—the one who always has your back—your “ride or die” who always keeps it real. The friend who reminds you of your strength and who you are when you can’t muster the vision for yourself. My true “bestie.”

For this reason, it is a part of my daily life. It is my prayer when I wake up and when I lay my head down for the night. I pray it in English and Spanish. I pray it alone and with my wife. I mostly love engaging the prayer in a group of people.

LA ORACIÓN DE PROTECCIÓN

por James Dillet Freeman

La luz de Dios nos rodea;
El amor de Dios nos envuelve;
El poder de Dios nos protege;
La presencia de Dios vela por nosotros.
¡Dondequiera que estamos, está Dios!



Praying together amplifies the power of the words. It becomes a moment that transcends time and space to that place within of eternal oneness, wholeness, and completeness. It is a collective reminder of the power and potential we all have. As we pray together, we weave a unified field created to invoke Truth and the knowingness that no matter what is happening in our lives and in the world, together we can make the sacred shift.

The prayer never gets old, and it feels new to me each and every time. To this day, I get chills looking around the room as people hold hands and pray those words of protection at the end of Sunday service. I often see people looking at each other with love, smiling from ear to ear, sometimes with tears streaming down their face. You can see and feel that they feel a deep connection as they recite the compelling words of Truth together. Light, love, power, presence, God—the holiest of holies. The reminder of our tried-and-true best friend.

Rev. Christina Garza is senior minister at Unity of Nashville, Tennessee.



LIGHT AT THE DOOR

Rev. Edith Washington-Woods

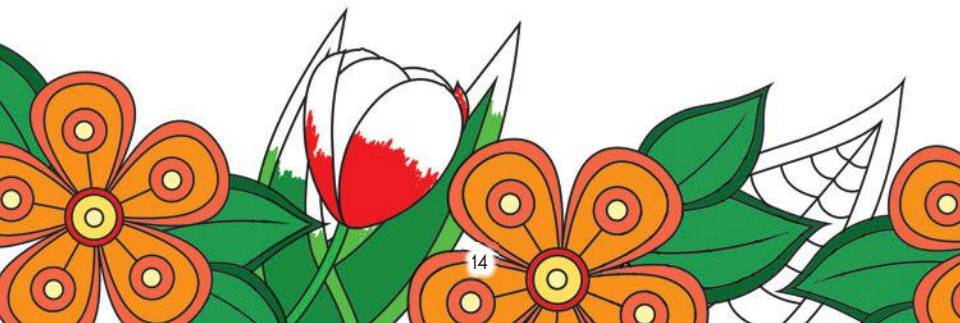


From the time I was a child, my life seemed very dark. As my parents' marriage began to disintegrate, I believed it was my fault. When I was 8 years old, they divorced and life seemed to stop. My daddy was gone. Nothing would ever be the same.

After that, darkness and dark times seemed to follow me everywhere I went. I could not understand why bad things kept happening to me even after I "escaped" to Los Angeles at age 18. The light started to shine as I attempted college for the second time, but I also deepened my relationship with drugs.

I "escaped" again to Minneapolis. It had taken 18 years before something started to shift. A few years after moving, I got sober from alcohol and opiates. I had a spiritual experience. Then my sponsor invited me to a Unity church. I heard for the first time, *The light of God surrounds me.*

I knew precisely what had happened the day I became sober, but now I had six words that described my experience. At that moment of moving from active addiction to recovery, it was as if the door that had a slight crack in it when I was 18 had been flung wide open.



Now I understand that not only does the light of God surround me but also it flows through and as me!

I realized that all the times when I tried to escape to another location, there was one common denominator—

me! I carried myself everywhere I went. As I started to live more positively, creating affirmations of who I chose to be in the world, my light was shining brighter than I could ever imagine.

*There is always light
in the midst of the darkness.*

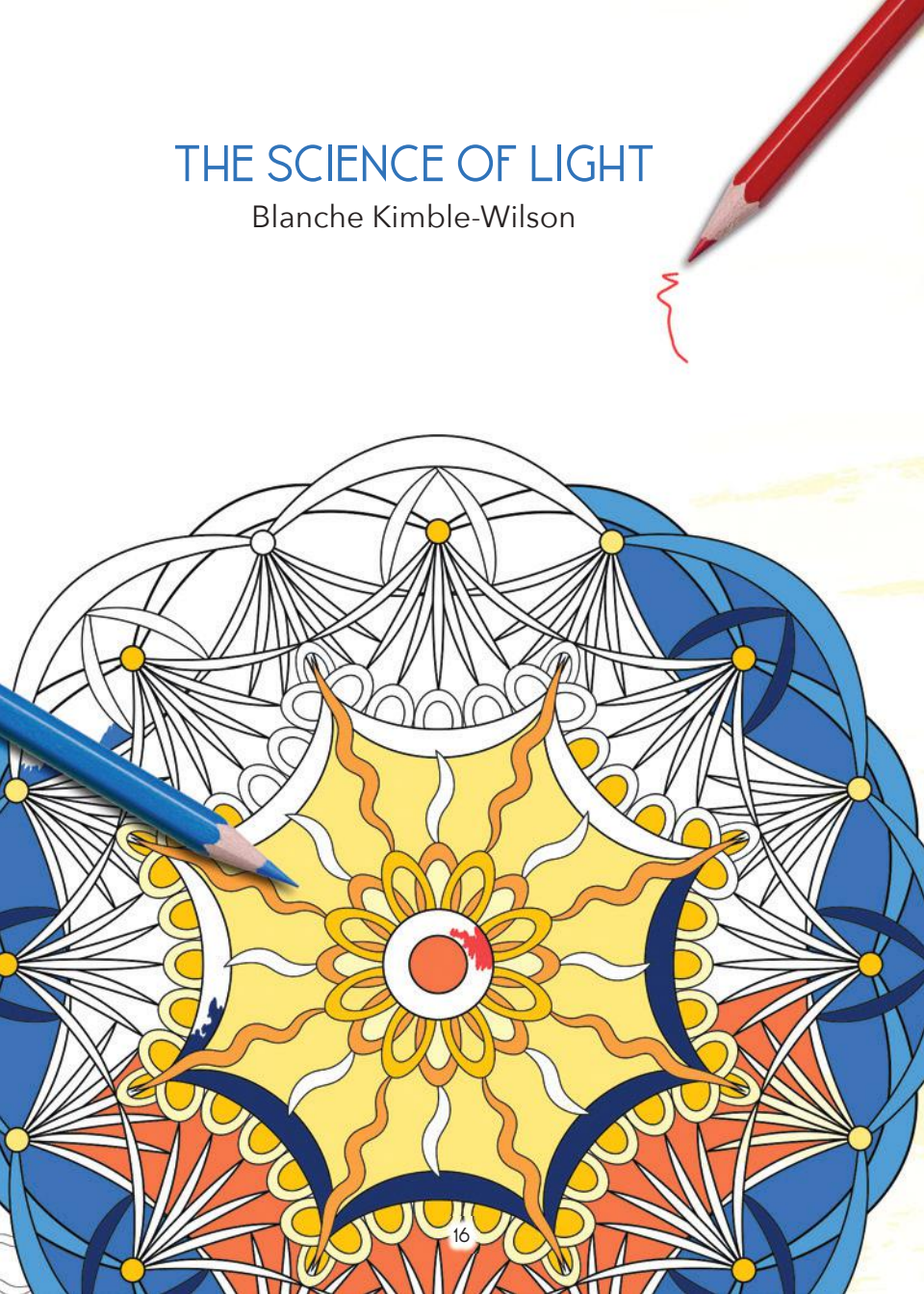
I also know that if it was possible for me to discover the light of God, anyone can, regardless of the life they are living. Now I embrace dark times when they come, because there is always light in the midst of the darkness.

Rev. Edith Washington-Woods is senior minister at Unity of Gaithersburg, Maryland.



THE SCIENCE OF LIGHT

Blanche Kimble-Wilson



I am intrigued by the statement, *The light of God surrounds us*. To me, it is like saying the air of God not only surrounds us but also is within us as the breath we breathe. It is ever available and everywhere present in all parts of our universe. Though we can't see air itself, we see the effects of its action, like clouds blowing. In like manner, we don't see God, but we see the effects of the activity of God in the animated, created universe.

To truly understand the enormity of visible and invisible spaces, I have been on a mind trip to discover little ways to unpack the light of God as a spiritual tool when appreciating the many blessings in my life. As I seek to understand these two concepts—God as light and air—prayer and meditation become my spiritual tools to keep my thoughts centered on the light of God always surrounding me, revealing itself to me even in my darkest moments as guidance and illumination.

In science and biology studies, I am learning to see the light of God as the basic energy of cell-making in both animate and inanimate objects. Each atom is light energy moving at varying speeds, frequencies, and orbits within each created cell.

I am learning to look at the seemingly mundane or complex objects we use every day as visible, tangible, functional expressions of the light of God. I am moving from appreciating the obvious sources of light like the sun, moon, and stars or lightning in a storm to looking at the various man-made objects that emit light—or power that can be converted into light, such as dams and power stations—to help us live better lives as we, too, embody the light of God.

Think of all the ways light illuminates our world. Infrared light is invisible to the naked eye. Laser light can be focused to cut



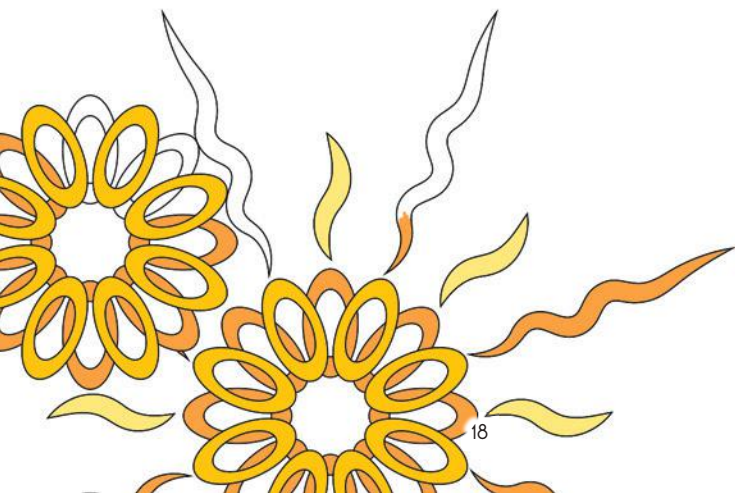
metals or perform delicate surgeries. We have lights in operating rooms or onstage, lamps and track lights in houses, headlights on vehicles, and lights on all other forms of transportation. Inside cars, warning signals that use light and sound help us check our blind spots or alert us if we are leaving our lane. Moving from functional to fun, we have lights in digital games, backlit computer screens and keyboards, arcades, casino games, toys, and rides at a park or on a riverboat. The list is endless.



No matter what we do in life, we are expressing the light of God.

No matter what we do in life, we are expressing the light of God as intelligence and creativity working through the minds of humanity as we devise more and more ways to display the light of God in ever-expanding modalities and uses. I give thanks for the light of God that surrounds everything!

Blanche Kimble-Wilson is a longtime writer for Daily Inspiration, a publication of the Universal Foundation for Better Living.



*The Love of God
Enfolds Me ...*



MAKING GOD PERSONAL

Rev. Saba Mchunguzi





We've learned in Unity and New Thought that Jesus brought a new spiritual understanding to the world. He brought a new way to look at God/Creator and a new way to look at our relationship to God.

Jesus generally referred to God as "father," which in his day was a very positive term. It meant someone who was the head of the family, a leader, a guide, a protector. People looked up to and had faith in their fathers. They willingly followed the wise counsel of a father, knowing he would never lead them astray. They knew that regardless of anything they did or anything that happened, their father would always love them and care for them.

I believe Jesus wanted us to think of God in those same terms. Jesus took God out of the sky and made that presence and power personal to everyone, everywhere. When I think of the "Prayer for Protection," I am reminded of this new perspective that Jesus brought to the world. This prayer



is all-encompassing, and in just a few short lines, it typifies all that God has done, is doing, and will do for everyone. I know God is spirit and isn't a person with a gender, but this prayer makes me feel close to that presence and that power.

When I affirm: *The light of God surrounds me*, I feel uplifted because I recognize that the seeming darkness around me—the fear, negativity, and doubts—has no power over me. In truth, I am surrounded by the divine light of the Christ. I recognize the dark and negative energy is only a temporary appearance, because in truth I am walking in the light. I am reminded of the scripture, “God is light and in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

When I affirm: *The love of God enfolds me*, I am comforted in knowing that the loving presence and power of God is with me, regardless of what I may be experiencing in the world. People I encounter may disagree with me or may not want me to succeed. However, when I declare this statement from the “Prayer for Protection,” I feel the love in my life, which is the essence of God, and I realize, “If God is for us, who is against us?” (Romans 8:31)



When I affirm: *The power of God protects me*, I am reminded that in my human self, as a physical being, I have limited power. If I am tempted to rely on my intellect or ego to fight my day-to-day battles, this statement reminds me that I don't need to fight my own battles. I am reminded, "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

The last two lines of this prayer are powerful: "The presence of God watches over me. Wherever I am, God is." The presence of God represents the totality of God, the Allness of God, the Allness of Spirit. It gives me a sense of awe to think that the Allness that created the universe is watching over me and everyone else in the world at all times! It is guiding, protecting, and sustaining all of humankind. It is omnipresent in that it is everywhere equally and evenly present: "He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:8).

Rev. Saba Mchunguzi is minister at Unity of Huntington in Huntington Station, New York.



EXPERIENCE THE LOVE

Rev. Bronte Colbert



Consider taking a moment to say or think about this line from the “Prayer for Protection”: *The love of God enfolds me*. Close your eyes and repeat it slowly, focusing on each word. What does saying the phrase feel like for you? A warming hug? Being snuggled in a toasty comforter? Having a protective, supportive bubble of love around you? Something else? Its power lies partly in what it means to you and how it makes you feel.

Now go deeper and center in the moment, clearing away busy thoughts, relaxing any tension in your body. If you're able, stretch your arms, gently shake your hands out a bit, then wrap your arms around yourself in a hug, a gentle squeeze. Or, instead, imagine yourself cozy in the comforter, bubble, or image of your choice.

Repeat the prayer's phrase while picturing yourself enfolded in the love of God. This is not a love that travels to you from somewhere out there, but rather it is a supportive love emanating from the divine essence within you. Bask in the depth of its gifts: peace, encouragement, comfort, and strength.

God's love is given to us freely. It is pure, without judgment. It is not parceled out according to some valuation of our worth. We are worthy of divine love no matter what! We can receive it despite any self-judgment we may hold, any regrets, any error thinking, or any poor choices we feel we've made. It flows to us whether or not we've been loving to others. The love of God is ours to receive, and we are doubly blessed because we have the divine awareness to acknowledge it and the capability to send love forward to others.

Do you have concerns about a dear one or someone on your prayer list? Picture them wrapped in love as you say the “Prayer for Protection” for them. Hold the assurance that they, too, are warmly enveloped in God’s love.

Here are a few of many ways to pray, *The love of God enfolds me*:

Whisper the line when you’re feeling worried or afraid, or make it a proclamation of gratitude when you’re bursting with appreciation.

If discouragement seems to stifle your hopes and dreams, use the prayer to find your inner strength, bolstered by God’s love, to move ahead.

Post it as a reminder on your mirror, on a wall, in your phone, or even by your alarm clock.

Use it as a tool to imagine best-case scenarios rather than worst-case scenarios.

Send the thought, *The love of God enfolds you*, out to the entire world, picturing all people wherever they are, whatever they’re doing, receiving the gift of the presence, the power, and the light and love of God. Does that even seem possible? It is, because the love of God enfolds you.

Rev. Bronte Colbert is the minister at Unity Athens, Georgia.

THE LOVE OF GOD ENFOLDS ME, YOU, US

Rev. David B. Adams



Love is intrinsic to our nature. When it is allowed to be expressed, love is capable of bringing harmony to situations of discord. It encourages us toward understanding when disagreement seems the order of the day.

Love is capable of uniting us in times of division. It invites us to seek common ground in the face of strife.

Love is capable of attracting us toward its likeness in others. It inspires us to come together and build a beloved community. As we learn to live in cooperation with the abiding principle of love, we more fully grow in our potential as one human family.

While James Dillet Freeman's "Prayer for Protection" brings peace and comfort to my daily life, its third line in any of the following iterations has a special place in my heart.

THE LOVE OF GOD ENFOLDS ME.

When I raise the blinds in the morning, I am often greeted with the brilliance of the sun. As it lovingly warms my face and body, it awakens love within me. The sensation of the sun's warmth seeping into me harmonizes with the ineffable love of God within me. Love—the harmonizing principle throughout creation—invigorates my spirit and infuses my day. Even if the sun isn't shining and no matter what happens in the day ahead, I know that I remain enfolds, embraced, and cared for by the divinity within and all around me.

THE LOVE OF GOD ENFOLDS YOU.

As I sink into the busyness of my day, it can be so easy to become blind to anything other than my tasks. If amid the hustle I choose to stop and look around, I see others with the same intense drive and am afforded an opportunity to see each person as God sees them. Love—the unifying principle throughout creation—is at work, guiding and directing each of us on our individual quests.

THE LOVE OF GOD ENFOLDS US.

As my day ends, nothing is more pleasing than reflecting on all I witnessed. I saw people move joyfully through their day with a sense of confidence and strength. I watched people move through challenging experiences with a modicum of grace and ease. No matter how willingly or freely the love of God was expressed through those I encountered or through me, I close this and every day secure in the fact that love was present. Love—the attractive, gravitational principle throughout creation—brings our varied ways of being into a cohesive whole.

The love of God enfolds me, you, and all of us. It permeates and infuses every aspect of our being and that of all creation. Keep this in mind as you move through your day and watch the love of God, expressing as you, enfold each moment in exquisite beauty.

Rev. David B. Adams is senior cominister at Unity of Independence, Missouri.

*The Power of God
Protects Me ...*



PRAYING THROUGH PAIN

Rev. Todd Humphrey



“Where was God then? Why wasn’t God protecting them?” Unexpected and unexplained tragedies have sometimes shattered the faith and ripped open the hearts of my friends and loved ones and many others in this coastal community I call home. After one heart-wrenching conversation with a longtime Truth student, I reflected on the “Prayer for Protection”—this much-loved Unity prayer that has brought great comfort to so many—because it now felt empty and false for this individual.

Even for the most dedicated students of Unity, the “Prayer for Protection” can appear dualistic. When we say of *God*, the light, love, power, and presence sometimes seem to be of something separate from us. Here in this incredible physical world of divine ideas made manifest, it’s easy to become seduced by the appearance of separation. When we are gripped by grief and the turmoil of loss, we inevitably focus on what’s missing, what’s wrong, how life is not appearing the way we believe it should. In this constricted place in consciousness, it can overwhelmingly feel

as if God is abandoning or punishing us. Luckily, our Master Teacher and Way Shower Jesus taught us that we, too, can overcome the appearance of separation and experience oneness as he did.

The “Prayer for Protection” is an affirmation of the unlimited wellspring of life, substance, and intelligence available to us in consciousness.

Our beloved “Prayer for Protection” is not a magic spell that casts a supernatural security blanket over our physical experience of life. It is not a prayer to God out there somewhere. Rather, it aligns us with our indwelling Christ and the sanctuary within, where there is greater spiritual understanding (light), unlimited supply (love), unlimited creative potential (power), and awareness of our true being (presence). The “Prayer for Protection” is an affirmation of the unlimited wellspring of life, substance, and intelligence



available to us in consciousness. As we affirm this, we awaken in our mind the resources—the divine ideas—needed to face every challenge in this manifest world.

Jesus took time apart to sit in the Silence. The “Prayer for Protection” describes what is available to me when I sit in the Silence and commune in that secret place with the Truth of my being. Wherever we are in consciousness, God is there because we are individualized expressions of absolute good and unconditional love.

This Truth won't stop things from occurring that are painful and difficult: inexplicable tragedies, the endings of relationships and jobs, or the departures of loved ones for their next adventure in Spirit. But it does remind us of our ability to shape our experience of events in the world. With this reminder, I can rest and know that all is well when I do the work of overcoming and take time to experience oneness, right here, as the light, the love, the power, and the presence. I am. God is. One.

Rev. Todd Humphrey is minister at Crystal Coast Unity in Atlantic Beach, North Carolina.

NEVER WITHOUT POWER

Rev. Bill Englehart

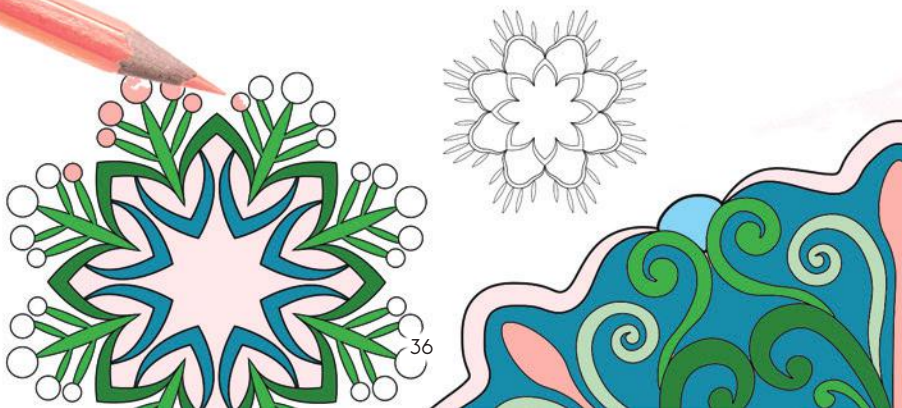


When have you felt protected by the power of God?

A Midwestern storm raged outside my house in Kansas. The thunder and lightning were so loud that I can recall them to this day. The temperature hovered around freezing, and at some point, the rain turned into sleet and then everything turned into ice.

There is nothing more beautiful in the light of day than seeing trees and everything in between covered with ice. But that's during the daytime. At night, the thunder and lightning crackled and the house shook. The weight of the ice on trees that were still filled with leaves caused limbs to creak and break like thousands of pencils being snapped.

My home was in an old neighborhood with many tall, 50-year-old trees. Some limbs came down and hit the roof. One took down the power line in the backyard, which ripped the meter off the house along with much of the guttering. The electricity was out, and I was sitting in the dark with all those terrifying sounds. What was I to do in this situation? I found myself automatically speaking the "Prayer for Protection" out loud. I focused on the line: *The power of God protects me.*



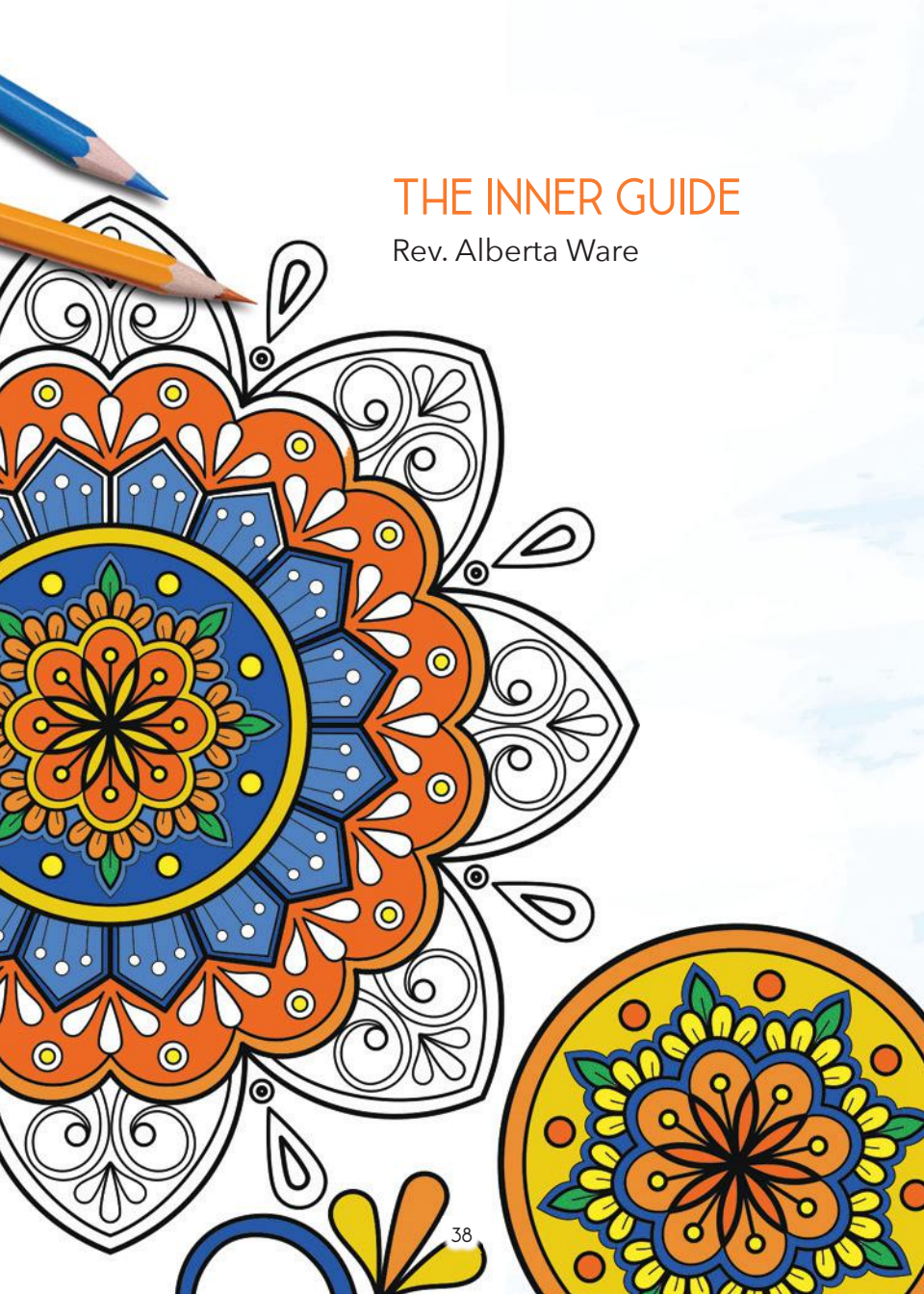
The storm might have been out of my control, and the effects were going to be what they were going to be, but I found a calm in the storm by repeating the words, *The power of God protects me*. I was not alone, and anything essential would be protected.

The next day was Sunday, and I was scheduled to guest speak at Unity Temple on the Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri. Would I be able to get there? Overnight, the streets had become skating rinks. When the sun came up, I decided to give it a go. After all, I reflected, *The power of God protects me*.

All the way to church, I heard radio accounts of how many people had lost power during the storm. When I arrived, I heard the same laments, “My power is out.” “I have no power.” “I don’t know when my power will return.” When I got up on the platform to begin my talk, I pointed out a Truth that was revealed to me when the storm was raging. We may be without electricity, but we are never without power! After all, *The power of God protects me!* This power protects us all if we tap into it.

Rev. Bill Englehart is a writer, speaker, and teacher in Tucson, Arizona.





THE INNER GUIDE

Rev. Alberta Ware

Often when we think of protection, we think of it as it relates to danger or a situation that appears threatening. However, I see God's protection as my guide as I move through my daily experiences.

The guide seems to step in when there is a decision to be made. Initially, the choice I am considering does not seem to be negative or even threatening, but the guide, the protection that covers me, steps in to offer a new reason for making a different choice. When I follow the guide, everything works out in divine order. After careful review of the choice I ultimately rejected, I realize the guide protected me from a situation that would have been stressful and even unproductive.

As I see and believe in the power of God protecting me, I know I am in a position of complete trust in God. Through my action of choosing to follow my guide, I exercise my conscious power of thought. My power of thought is completely under my control.

An important factor for me to consider, however, is that so many thoughts enter and move through my mind each second, each minute, and each hour of the day. I truly need a thought mechanism to control my thoughts and to serve as a reminder to be aware of the thoughts I connect with my feelings. This is because I know that connecting my thoughts and feelings together will bring about a manifestation in my life, world, and affairs. Without an element of control, my life could and would be very different from what I experience today. I am grateful I made the choice to look at the prayer in a new way and see the power statement within the prayer as my guide protecting me—at times even from myself.

My guide remains present even when I fail to recite the “Prayer for Protection” as I start my day. I like to think of that coverage as residual protection. I know you may be thinking that my guide is the indwelling Christ presence or even the “still, small voice.” The Christ presence is an indwelling, permanent presence, part of our spiritual DNA.

The “still, small voice” is always speaking to us, but we don’t always listen or follow its message. But, for me, using the “Prayer for Protection” as part of my guidance system makes my guide more present—more in my face, so to speak! This prayer is more than something to recite at the end of a class or church service. It provides me with a daily guide, protecting me in all things.

Rev. Alberta Ware is on the ministerial team at Christ Universal Temple in Chicago, Illinois.



*The Presence of God
Watches Over Me ...*



ADDING THE I AM AFFIRMATIONS

Rev. Juan del Hierro





I'd be lying if I said I remembered the first time I heard and prayed the "Prayer for Protection." Yet looking back on my experience with Unity, this prayer is a constant. It has been recited at our spiritual community, Unity on the Bay in Miami, Florida, at almost every Sunday service. First, I spoke it as a congregant, then a member, and now as the senior minister. When I reflect on my memories of it, I feel a deep sense of love, connection, and community.

I loved learning the history of the prayer—how James Dillet Freeman wrote it in response to the need for protection during World War II, and how it is a prayer that was carried to the moon by astronaut Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin. There is such richness in knowing it has touched the lives of millions of people. I especially loved learning how it evolved throughout time. This feels very Unity to me—it can evolve as we evolve.

Learning that its first iteration focused more on the power of Christ reminds me of its origin in remembering the power is within us. Learning that the last line of the prayer, *Wherever I am, God is*, was added later on gave me permission to continue to seek its next evolution.

As I continued my spiritual path in Unity, I came to understand more fully that there was no separation between God and me. Oneness itself is our Truth. I also came to notice that I still carried some old beliefs about God, and in some ways, as much as I looked to heal them, I also affirmed them. And so began my desire to make my prayers more grounded in the embodiment of Truth. I believe that prayer is to be embodied, God is at hand, and our nature is divine.

When I first heard the I AM affirmations that can be used with the “Prayer for Protection,” I felt the birth of the next evolution of this beautiful prayer. For me, when we speak of God in this prayer, we are not speaking about a God outside of us. We speak of the personal experience of God, the Presence in which we live.

In our church, we say the “Prayer for Protection” this way:

The light of God surrounds us; we are light.
The love of God enfolds us; we are love.
The power of God protects us; we are power.
The presence of God watches over us; we are presence.
Wherever we are, God is, and all is well. We are divine.

Some other churches have added similar affirmations, often spoken as call and response:

The light of God surrounds us.
I am the light of God.
The love of God enfolds us.
I am the love of God ...

And so on.



In the midst of challenges and our worries and anxiety about them, it can be difficult to remember our Truth, our oneness. When we feel comforted and at peace, I believe we create the space for greater clarity about the nature of God and our own divinity. I know the “Prayer for Protection” brings us a sense of comfort and peace. What better way to use the space it creates within us than to affirm our embodiment of God in expression.

Yes, I am comforted knowing God’s light surrounds me, and then I affirm I am that light. Yes, God’s love enfolds me, and I feel it bringing me peace and calm, and so I affirm my truth. This is how the prayer has evolved at Unity on the Bay. We not only speak the “Prayer for Protection” but use the space it creates in us to affirm all that we are.

I witness such power and authenticity when I hear our community speak, “We are divine,” at the end of our prayer. It is everything I have looked to inspire in others, and I believe it is what the “Prayer for Protection” in all its iterations was meant to do. Sure, it may sound different, and it may take some time to get used to, but it always takes time to ground ourselves in something new. It is worth it though, and more important, it is our Truth.

Rev. Juan del Hierro is senior minister at Unity on the Bay in Miami, Florida.



PRACTICING THE PRESENCE

Rev. Kurt Condra



By Chicago standards, the first day in March was exceptionally warm—50 degrees. But spring here comes in fits and starts. If forecasts held, more snow was on the way. So, of course, I headed for the beach—my favorite spot for experiencing God's presence as it watches over us.

Actually, I was more than a little desperate to feel Presence just then. Work demands had me feeling like a dog jerked around on a leash with a choke collar. Plus, I was hindered by a nasty head cold.

You know the familiar Unity adage, "There is no spot where God is not." I wasn't feeling it on this day. I believed it, but it wasn't evident in my current experience. So, I needed a beach fix.

Oak Street Beach on the western shore of Lake Michigan is unusual because it faces north. That time of year the trees were still bare, and there was a 100-yard patch of sand with no high-rises blocking the blazing sun. Snow-covered for weeks, it was now getting blasted, vaporizing moisture that a day before was frozen solid. The effect was a beach that looked to be smoldering.

It was surreal because with each step the vapors in front of me dissolved. Behind me, the smoldering had cleared. Ahead, it continued drifting and wafting. The clearing, of course, was an illusion of perspective. Vapors continued rising behind and ahead, but with the angle of the sun, my shifting position, and the limitations of my human eyes, I couldn't perceive them. Walking through it felt mystical.

*Sun, stars, moon, weather,
plants, birds, and animals are
all palpable reminders that we're
part of a greater whole.*

It was a reminder of how we sometimes experience Presence: illusive, intangible, ethereal even.

For many of us, nature is a go-to spot for experiencing divine presence. Sun, stars, moon, weather, plants, birds, and animals are all palpable reminders that we're part of a greater whole. But if there truly is no spot where God is not, then we ought to be able to know the same sense of Presence and care in every area of our lives.

The first draft of this essay was about reconciling the original "Prayer for Protection" with newer versions that add affirmations. Then I read the assignment more carefully and realized we were specifically asked *not* to write about that, as it would be covered elsewhere in this booklet. (See Rev. Juan del Hierro's previous article.)

In that moment of realization, I was given a choice that I might easily have missed. It was a crucial choice, I believe, between cultivating a deeper awareness of God's presence or stumbling blindly on, dragged by the inertia of habituated pattern and human ego.

The choice? I could give thanks for the nudge that prompted a rereading of the assignment—or not. It doesn't matter whether it *feels* like divine inspiration. If we desire to experience Presence in our daily lives, the first step is claiming its expression even in our mundane activities. The simplest spiritual practice for that is gratitude. “Thank you, God, for time and effort saved” in this case. Or “thank you, God, for the will to get my stuffy head and overworked butt to the beach” in the earlier scenario.

It's one thing to recognize God's presence in mystical or transcendent experiences in the natural world. That's easy, especially if it's a rare phenomenon. Next-level presence is learning to recognize its ever presence in all things and all moments.

Claim that the presence of God is watching over you—often. Give thanks for even the slightest evidence. As surely as spring follows winter, day by day, thought by thought, your experience of Presence, of being watched over by a force that's infinitely loving, will blossom.

Rev. Kurt Condra is senior minister at Unity on the North Shore in Evanston, Illinois.



THE GIFT OF PRESENCE

Rev. Karen R. Shepherd



According to *The Revealing Word*, the presence of God is “the awareness of Spirit within one’s own being. It manifests as increased life, peace, love, and a deep sense of spiritual joy.” The abiding presence of the Christ within is “the presence of light, peace, joy, love, life, and substance ... within, about, before, and beside” me.

I feel the presence of God when I pause from daily activities to bring about full awareness. Even though the Presence makes itself known most fully in the Silence, it may come unbidden at any time. For example, some beautiful expression of God may come within reach of one or more senses: the pleasant aroma of roses; a beautiful, unexpected vista; or the touch of an exquisite piece of fabric.

I sometimes worry about the safety and well-being of my adult child due to the path he has chosen. Once I expressed my misgivings to a friend who reminded me, “The same God that watches over you watches over him.”

In other words, he carries that same Presence within his being and has the same gift of Presence that all of us have.

I have adopted this affirmation as an antidote to worry when I haven’t heard from him. When this happens, I remember my friend’s gentle words and remind myself that the Presence abides within him just as it abides within me. I rely upon Presence to calm my fears, and it brings to mind the old maxim, “If you are worrying, you are not praying. If you are praying, you are not worrying.”

While my son has lived apart from us, the Presence has protected him just as it protects me. He can depend on that Presence to guide, protect, and direct him.

I pray for him and everyone else to become fully aware of the Presence. We acquire an awareness of the omnipresence of God through regular prayer and meditation, going within to discern our connection with Spirit. A schedule of prayer, meditation, and study serves to help us eliminate worldly distractions that interfere with our awareness and eliminate obstacles to its realization.

What obstacles? Blocks to the awareness of the Presence include such factors as lack of forgiveness of self and others, lack of gratitude, and lack of self-worth. As we seek to know the presence of God within, we grow spiritually. Awareness becomes so strong that we never have to doubt and can go forward to meet our greatest good and highest joy.

Rev. Karen R. Shepherd leads Unity Good Shepherd Ministries, an alternative ministry in Oakwood Village, Ohio.

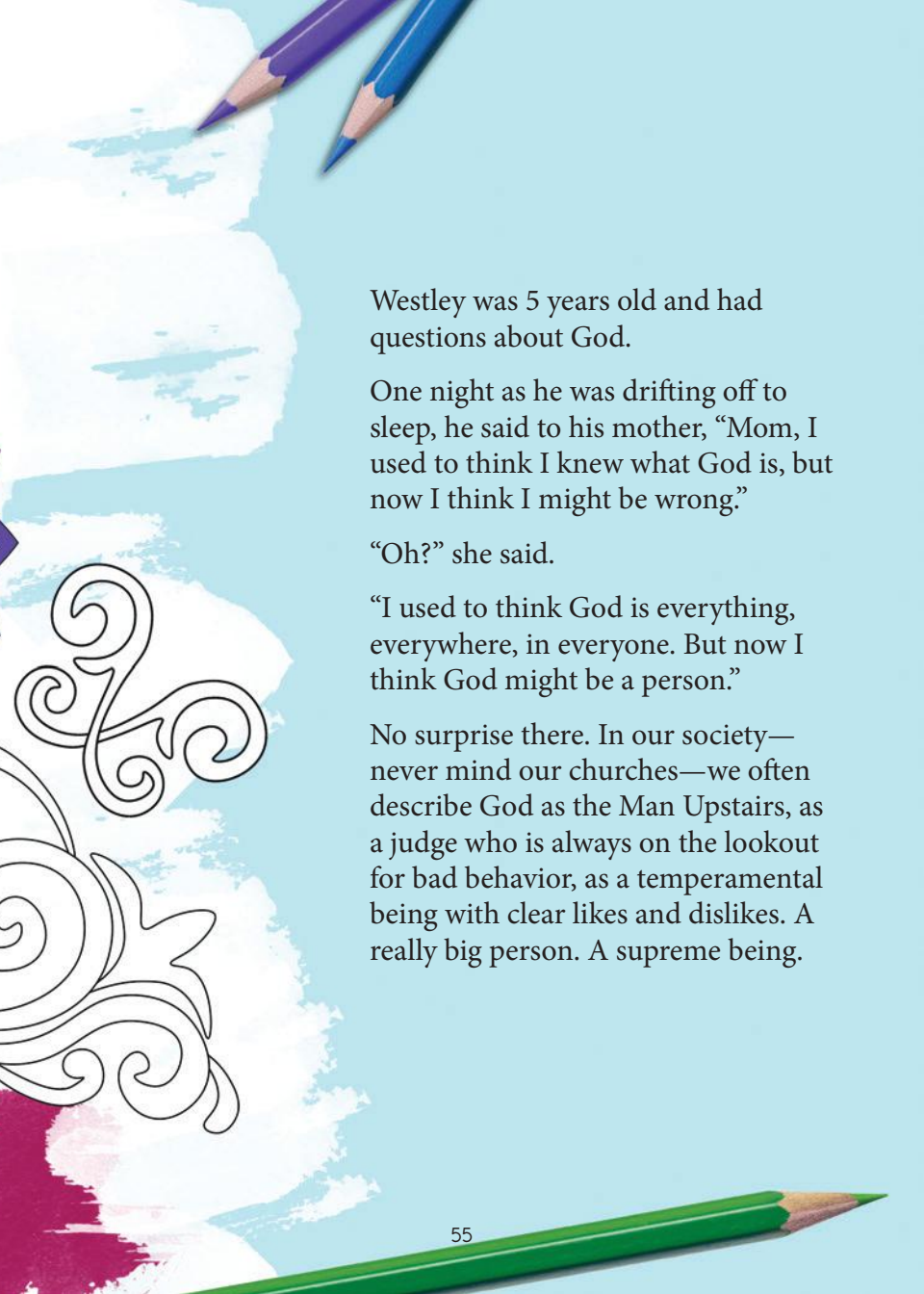
Wherever I Am,
God Is



WHAT DOES A 5-YEAR-OLD KNOW ABOUT GOD?

Rev. Ellen Debenport





Westley was 5 years old and had questions about God.

One night as he was drifting off to sleep, he said to his mother, “Mom, I used to think I knew what God is, but now I think I might be wrong.”

“Oh?” she said.

“I used to think God is everything, everywhere, in everyone. But now I think God might be a person.”

No surprise there. In our society—never mind our churches—we often describe God as the Man Upstairs, as a judge who is always on the lookout for bad behavior, as a temperamental being with clear likes and dislikes. A really big person. A supreme being.

What started Westley's line of questioning was the prayer we used at the end of every service in my church, the "Prayer for Protection" by Unity poet James Dillet Freeman. Westley's class at church had been rehearsing so the kids could lead the prayer for the congregation one Sunday.

The light of God surrounds us,
The love of God enfolds us,
The power of God protects us,
The presence of God watches over us.
Wherever we are, God is.

Westley asked, "The power of God protects us. Does that mean God is like a superhero? And the presence of God watches over us. Does that mean God has eyeballs? Does God have a body?"

Westley had been studying parts of the body in preschool, so his mother asked, "Have you ever seen your heart?"

"No, but I know it keeps me alive," he said.

"Well, God is like a heart. It's in everyone."

He thought about that as the conversation continued into the next day. He would play for a while, then ask more questions.

Finally, he announced to his mother, "I get it.

"God is like my breath. It goes into me and keeps me alive, but it also flows out of me, so it's around me, and around everyone and in everyone!

“I was right the first time,” he concluded. “God is everywhere.”

I love that Westley had such a clear understanding of a Presence that could be everywhere at once and in all things. The transcendent God is a concept many adults can't grasp.

Westley even incorporated it into his blessing for a meal. (Westley insisted on leading all the prayers at home.) He wasn't addressing a Supreme Being, just stating his gratitude.

I'm glad God is everywhere.
I'm glad God is in everything.
I'm glad God is love.
I'm glad God is in me.

It's a challenge to hold on to the idea of a transcendent God. Because if God is all there is—this force field of love, light, and intelligence—then what else could human creatures be but divine?

Westley understands that too. Everyone is divine. Everyone has God within.

So, I leave you with Westley's follow-up question to challenge your spiritual thinking: “If God is in everyone, what makes Jesus so special?”

Rev. Ellen Debenport is vice president of publishing for Unity World Headquarters.

LEARNING HOW TO BE

Rev. Sandra Campbell





When I was first introduced to Unity, my friend Joann insisted that I needed to learn to “just be!” Those words meant nothing to a 21-year-old in a hurry to get on with life. The more I learned Unity teachings, the more profound those two words became.

For me, the last verse of the “Prayer for Protection” summarizes how to be patient and calm no matter what is occurring in my life. That simple phrase, *Wherever I am, God is*, brings clearly into focus that *I AM* is my beingness. It is my peace in the midst of the storm.

One of the first things we learn in English grammar is how to conjugate the verb “to be”—I am, you are, we are, she is, he is, they are. In two simple words, *I AM* describes the essence of who we are—our divinity.



As a child in the Baptist church, I learned that the Ten Commandments are basic guidelines for living a godly life. The third commandment in the King James Bible, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Exodus 20:7), was heavily emphasized by my parents and Sunday school teachers, who said it meant we should not use cuss words. That passage from scripture made me curious about what God’s name really was and what it had to do with saying bad words.

In the same scriptures, Moses hears a voice from the burning bush. He asks the voice, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is

I AM is our personal affirmation of who we are and what we are called to be—the God within.

his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:13-14).

Never before had I realized the relationship between this scripture and my being, my I AM. This revelation gives a whole new meaning to how we take the Lord’s name in vain anytime



we follow our I AM with words that do not affirm the goodness of God. Now, when I conjugate the verb *to be*, I am careful to follow *I AM*, *you are*, *she is*, *he is*, *we are*, *they are* with a word that represents the goodness of God in me and in everyone else. The I AM (God) in me sees the I AM (God) everywhere, in everyone, and in everything.

I AM is our personal affirmation of who we are and what we are called to be—the God within. Whenever we say I AM, it must be followed by the Truth of our being: I AM beautiful, I AM courageous, I AM capable, I AM powerful, I AM creative.

A phrase commonly spoken in Unity circles is, “There is no spot where God is not.” Since God is in me, no matter where I find myself—even in the most difficult and challenging circumstances—the God in me is always right where I AM. In those moments, I breathe, center myself, and affirm with confidence: *Wherever I AM (I BE), God is.*

Rev. Sandra Campbell is associate minister at Unity Temple on the Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri, and executive director of the Unity Urban Ministerial School.

COMING INTO ALIGNMENT

Rev. Elizabeth Longo



The first time I heard the “Prayer for Protection,” I was blown away. It resonated as Truth, and it sparked fire in my belly and the passion to explore it further. With every part of my being, I wanted to know and feel that I was being held and protected by God. I was tired of being afraid to go for my dreams and playing it small.

Once I learned that God was everywhere present—within me and all around me—I understood that God is Beingness itself, the source and essence of all there is. Deepening in this Truth has become my life’s purpose. Basking in God’s love and light has radically transformed my life.

Continually, I affirm that I am always loved and supported. Whatever condition I experience, I observe my thoughts and keep my heart open. If fear, worry, or challenges arise, instead of whining and feeling sorry for myself, I pause, breathe, and affirm the “Prayer for Protection.”

At once, I feel the shift within me and I relax. With my mind and heart aligned in the goodness of God, I know that all is well. My heart smiles, and every part of my being rejoices in the knowing that I am a part of something greater.

A few years ago, I bought the car of my dreams, and in less than a week, someone rear-ended me. I was distraught! Soon after it was repaired, it was sideswiped. From that moment forth, every time I get into my car, I recite the “Prayer for Protection.” I do the same when I travel.

When I open my eyes each morning, the first thing I say is, “Thank you, God.” This is my declaration to the Universe that I am committed to living my life completely aware that I cannot be separate from God. Then I say the “Prayer for Protection”—and repeat it a few times throughout my day—as a declaration to the Universe that I know I am an essential part of the whole and one with the goodness of God. Affirming *Wherever I am, God is* is my sacred mantra.

It is medicine for my soul when driving, traveling, going to a doctor’s visit, or before a meeting. It works magic for me. In an instant, I am able to let go of tension and stress, relaxing as I bask in the love of God. It brings me peace and mental clarity to be my best self.

Dedicating my life to knowing and abiding in the Presence brings the greatest fulfillment in my life. Unfazed by appearances, I trust that underlying all conditions is the invisible, loving essence of all there is. My faith in the spacious goodness of God is strong as I dare to go for my dreams with ease and grace. A multiverse of possibilities opens before me. Gratefully aware that I can’t ever be apart from my creator, I am safe and divinely guided wherever I am.

Rev. Elizabeth Longo is a coach and ministry consultant in South Florida.



UNITY

Discover. Grow. Experience.

Find Meaning and Insights—*Unity.org*

Articles, videos, meditations, and more all at your fingertips.



Experience the Power of Prayer

Reach out 24/7 for supportive prayer at unity.org/prayer or call 816-969-2000.

Connect on Social Media

Daily inspiration on your favorite social media channels—unity.org/social.

Feed Your Spirit

Daily Word® magazine offers encouraging messages in print or digital form at dailyword.com.



Deepen Your Spiritual Journey

Unity Magazine® explores spirituality, science, psychology, and metaphysics—unitymagazine.org.



Renew at Unity Village

Learn about retreats and spiritual renewal at unityvillage.org or 816-251-3540.



1901 NW Blue Parkway
Unity Village, MO 64065-0001
unity.org

G1321
Canada BN 13252 9033 RT
Printed U.S.A.