



VOLUME 14, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2016

## Coming Events

LIGHT is pleased to announce these events for February to May 2016.

There is *no admission charge* for any of these events, but donations are gratefully accepted.

### LIGHT Lecture Series

The talks will be held on the first Tuesday of the month in March, April and May. Attendees are invited to a buffet starting at 6:00 p.m., with the talk to follow at 7:00.

Location: Charisma Restaurant  
83D Sherbrook St.

Tuesday, March 1

Karen Toole: "Passion, Purpose and Pathways: An Exploration of Creating Meaning in Life"

Many of us ask: What should I do with the precious human life I have been given? Is there a "calling" which leads to a life path which provides expression for our specific gifts and abilities, gives meaning and purpose to our lives and meets the needs of the world? The talk will provide a spiritual perspective to create a deeper understanding of these important questions.

*Karen Toole recently retired as the Provincial Coordinator of Spiritual Health Care for Manitoba Health, but continues to be fully engaged with the community in a variety of spiritually-inspired endeavours. She teaches courses at the University of Winnipeg and Creative Retirement, and is a Faith page columnist for the Winnipeg Free Press.*

Tuesday, April 5

Darlene Tataryn: "Mondo Zen"

Mondo Zen is a meditation system of koan inquiry based on Japanese and Chinese Zen, updated for this century and Western culture. A koan is a question

designed to bring about direct experience of awakened mind. Insight into a correct understanding of the nature of mind and the function of our ego structures leads to conscious choice and reduced reactivity, and helps us live a life that supports enlightened stewardship of our own mind and heart in relationship to all others and our Earth.

*For many years Darlene Tataryn has facilitated spiritually-oriented groups and meditation programs, maintained a private counselling service and taught Applied Counselling for Red River College. In 1981 she was introduced to Theravada Buddhism by the lay monk Kema Ananda and later studied with teachers in the Karma Kagyu Nam Gyal lineage of Canada. In 2014 she was ordained into the Rinzaï Zen Hollow Bones order and given the names Emyo Seien (Gift of Clarity/Pure Circle).*

Tuesday, May 3

Victor Popow: "Destiny, Fate and Free Will"

Does God play dice or not? Do we have free will or are we subject to inescapable fate? These questions have been vigorously debated throughout history. Is there an answer? We will investigate possible answers through an exploration of science and mysticism and perhaps see.

*Victor Popow serves as the CEO of Northwest Law Enforcement Academy. He is a recognized fine artist and spiritualist who has spent a life-time investigating near-death experiences, meditation, initiation practices, ancient wisdom and the sacred around the world.*

The presentation will be preceded by a brief Annual General Meeting of LIGHT.

### LIGHT Special Event

Saturday, February 6, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Tara Maniar and Douglas Staley:  
"Awakening to Universal Consciousness"

Within every human being there is a spiritual core which resonates with Universal Spirit. By unfolding deeper levels of consciousness we can become sensitive to the vast interconnected web of life permeating the universe, and discover meaning and purpose in even the most ordinary events of life. Segments from the award-winning film *Inner Worlds, Outer Worlds* will augment a sharing of ideas and simple practices to awaken our higher human potential.

Location: Unity Centre of Winnipeg  
300 Arlington St. (just north of Portage)

*Tara Maniar is a certified Chakradance facilitator and Spiritual Life Coach who empowers individuals to transform their inner turmoil, identity crises and work/family confusion into enlightened possibilities. She guides individuals to discover their true self, live from their core and be their best at home, work and play.*

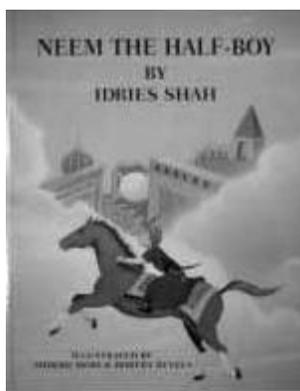
*Douglas Staley has studied a variety of spiritual teachings over the last four decades, with the aim of integrating Western and Eastern models of inner development.*

## LIGHT Donation of Children's Books: Update

In 2004 and 2005 LIGHT donated 360 titles of children's books to the 20 branches of the Winnipeg Public Library. They were chosen to promote greater inter-faith and cross-cultural understanding, and reflect the rich human heritage of fairy tales, fables, myths and teaching stories that exist in the many different cultures and spiritual traditions of the world. Many of the books were penned by prominent Manitoba authors such as Carol Matas, Joe McLellan and Sheldon Oberman, while others were written by acclaimed international authors and storytellers.

The Circulation department of the Winnipeg Public Library reports that in the 10 years since the donation, virtually all of the books remain in good condition and show

robust circulation figures, having been read by thousands of children and young adults in the community. Especially noteworthy is the fact that a significant proportion of these books are traditional Sufi stories, translated into English by Sufi author and teacher Idries Shah. The stories expose young readers to authentic, moderate Islamic spiritual thought and act as an



antidote to the distorted version of Islam propagated by ignorant zealots and extremists.

LIGHT has also financially supported the Institute for Cross-cultural Exchange (ICE), a Canadian charity dedicated to promoting cross-cultural learning and understanding ([www.iceeducation.org](http://www.iceeducation.org)). In the last decade they have donated more than 100,000 of Idries Shah's children's books to impoverished Canadian and Afghan children. Both ICE and LIGHT share a common goal of highlighting traditional spiritual teachings and fostering cross-cultural tolerance and respect.

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### Our Common Humanity

One of the most intriguing scientific and religious findings emerging from the marvel of space travel and exploration, are the reports by many astronauts of profoundly life-changing, even mystical, experiences as they viewed our planet from a grand cosmic perspective. They were able to directly sense and deeply feel the wondrous beauty of Earth and its place in a vast and mysterious universe. Canadian astronaut Robert Thirsk: "I wish that every human being had the opportunity to fly in space. There's a spiritual feeling that comes over us when we see the whole Earth from above, when we realize that everything is one and that we are all connected. There's a consciousness shift."

The Earth itself was seen as an integrated whole in which land, water, atmosphere and organic life co-exist in a complex interdependent and mutually-sustaining system. As the astronauts orbited our globe, the human-created

boundaries defining provinces, states and countries vanished and were revealed as relative, time-bound expressions of a 'consensus reality' created by the human mind. Less than 150 years ago there was no "Canada," and at some point in the future such a concept will be modified and redefined, or cease to exist altogether. These intrepid voyagers, as they ventured beyond our earthly home, understood what many spiritual teachings affirm: at the deepest level we are one great human family, and only secondarily members of a particular country, cultural group, race or religion.

When we turn our lens to humanity it is apparent that our similarities are much greater than our differences. On a biological basis humans differ, of course, in gender, age and race - qualities which have led to inequality, discrimination, exploitation and violence throughout recorded history. And although we also differ biologically in terms of body

dimensions, hair and eye colour and blood type, there are fewer societal implications for these differences; it is rare, for instance, when someone is disadvantaged for having green eyes, red hair or Blood Type O. And when we consider our internal organs we see that our heart, lungs, liver and kidneys are essentially the same from one being to another, so much so that organ transplants are a medical reality. Our psychological and spiritual lives are, in the most fundamental sense, the same throughout the world. Falling in love, grieving for the death of a loved one, being deeply moved by a marvellous sunset or the colour of autumn woods, living with pain, depression or addiction, witnessing the birth of a child, or experiencing unconditional love, compassion and spiritual awakening have no age, gender, racial or cultural boundaries.

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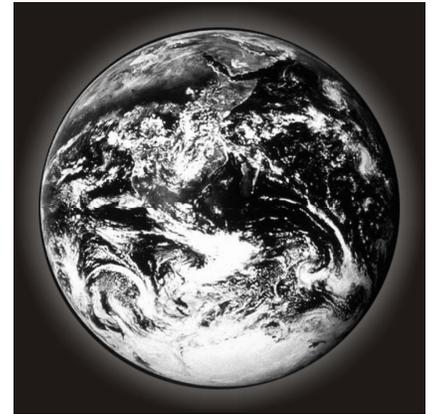
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The reconciliation of apparent differences into a complementary, all-encompassing unity also extends to the world-views of science and religion. Both are engaged in the pursuit of truth and seek to understand, through their own methods of study, the nature of reality. In this sense they are complementary, not antagonistic - two sides of one coin. Science investigates the physical, measurable world of matter and phenomena, while the spiritual impulse pursues the more subtle metaphysical dimension of meaning and purpose. Albert Einstein understood this fusion of mind and soul: "A spirit is manifest in the laws of the universe, a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and on the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble. In this way the pursuit of science leads to a religious feeling of a spiritual sort."

Humanity is now at a crossroads in terms of evolutionary development, and requires a dramatic shift in consciousness to embrace a more universal and holistic world-view. A view of humanity as one organism might enable us to take the selfless steps that could begin to solve our collective problems. We need to express in each of our lives a conscious altruism which is concerned with the welfare of all people - our human family. Compassion, service and generosity can become reflections of our sense of common humanity.

Our shared spiritual destiny as human beings is to awaken and marvel at the mystery of existence, at the beauty and majesty of Creation and the vast Intelligence lying at the heart of the phenomenal and spiritual realities that embrace and nourish us. In the words of philosopher and physicist Gustav Fechner, "Among all the mysteries of

existence, the greatest mystery is that there is existence at all."



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## Awakening to the Miracle of Ordinary Life

*Throughout the world, wise voices are emerging in these transformational times to guide humanity to a fuller realization of our higher individual and collective destiny. One of these 'conscious helpers' is Dennis Lewis, a long-time student of Taoism, Advaita Vedanta and the Gurdjieff Work:*

We are faced with a profound mystery: the mystery of ourselves here and now, on this earth. Whatever scientific or religious beliefs we may have about this mystery, about how and why we have come to be, most of us are "asleep" to its unfathomable immediacy, its "now-ness." We move through our lives in a state of waking sleep, a state of

When it is time for stillness, stillness;  
in the time of companionship,  
companionship;  
at the place of effort, effort.  
And in the time and place of  
anything, anything.

Sufi saying

psychological, cultural and spiritual hypnosis. Instead of experiencing ourselves consciously from moment to moment as living, breathing beings, we lose ourselves unconsciously in the various impulses and fragments of our self-images - our likes and dislikes, our pleasures and pains, our theories, our expectations, our dreams, our fears, and our beliefs. We take the present moment for granted, forgetting that our time on this earth is limited and that we and everyone we know is going to die.

We need to discover a new way of living. We need to learn how to engage with our lives in such a way that we begin to wake up from our sleep, from our dreams and illusions, from our narrow attitudes and prejudices. In discovering this new way of living, it must be clear to all of us that the first, most important, and last step is to remember that we're here and that the experience of this "here-ness" is a gift from the unknown.

As human beings, we have many things in common. We breathe, eat, talk, move, sense, feel, laugh, think, imagine, worry, suffer, hope, work and love. Above all, we experience. But what do we experience? And how? Do we experience the miraculous nature of "be-ing" itself? Or do we experience an impoverished, mostly imaginary life based on inner lying and fashioned out of the conditions and pressures of our upbringing, education, and culture? What would it mean to let go of everything we think we know about ourselves - whether positive or negative - and look at ourselves impartially, from an entirely new perspective? For we all know, in our heart of hearts, that we understand almost nothing about ourselves and our lives on this earth. To be sure, we have amassed a lot of so-called knowledge about ourselves, but this knowledge is based more on conjecture and imagination than on

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Awakening to the Miracle of Ordinary  
Life

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direct impressions, and it is shaped by our deep resistance to seeing ourselves as we are. These keep us from experiencing the question that needs to live in all of us, the question that can call us homeward toward our own fundamental being: "Who am I?"

What we need is to undertake an "inner work" that can help us cut through these attitudes, these limits to our perception, to see what is actually in front of us, no matter how "ordinary" it might seem to be. For the true mystery of the universe is not some place other than where we are. It is to be found right here and now in the living temple of our own awakened minds, bodies and senses. It is to be found right here and now in the field of our consciousness. It is through an exploration of consciousness, of the "witness" that can stand behind and embrace every perception and impression of our lives, that we can intentionally discover the miracle of the ordinary. But this is not easy.

The ordinary events of our everyday lives, whether they are personal or professional, give us extraordinary opportunities to awaken from our psychological and cultural sleep. As mundane as these events often seem to be, they are, when we look closer, filled with the unexpected, with surprises, contradictions, and other small shocks that can put us into question. If we can receive these shocks without trying to smooth them over, without lying to ourselves or others about them, they can help generate the energy to search not for new solutions to the problems of living but rather for a new, more global quality of consciousness, a consciousness that can embrace the whole of life. It is this consciousness that will not only help us live more intelligently, but, more importantly, will also help us, as Gurdjieff puts it, "to revalue our values," to come to a deeper perception of what is truly important in our lives.



If you can do small things well,  
you will do big things well.

Gurdjieff