

THE SPIRE

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OCTOBER 2013



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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I have been interested occasionally in what is commonly called the Near Death Experience. With the publication of Eben Alexander's book, Proof of Heaven, the issue has once again come to the fore in my thinking, and, if one is to judge by book sales, in our society as well. A Harvard educated neurosurgeon, with a supremely gifted intellect, Dr. Alexander was struck down by a rare form of bacterial meningitis which left him comatose. It was at this point, as physicians wondered about ending life support procedures, that the neurosurgeon had an out of body experience in which he flew on the wing of a great bird accompanied by a beautiful young woman, and voyaging toward the pulsing, phantasmagoric center of all reality; Christians might call it heaven. In the end the neurosurgeon, who had been adopted at an early age, discovered his female guide was the biological sister he had never known, who had died before he found his biological kin. A photograph confirmed that Eben Alexander's deceased sister had been his spiritual guide.

I first became interested in the phenomenon when Raymond

Moody wrote his bestseller, "Life After Life", in 1975. In that seminal work, Moody developed six sequential stages that people go through as they lie in a moribund state: The first stage and sensation is sound. The auditory capacity amplifies; one of his patients described the timbre of a Japanese wind chime, "tingling a long way off". The second stage is movement through a dark tunnel or trough. According to Moody, the individual experiences a rapid pulling away from self, a feeling as one patient described, akin to "riding on a roller coaster train at an amusement park." The out of body experience is the third stage. At this point the dying patient realizes he is floating above his "corpse" in the bed or on the operating table. He observes futile efforts to resuscitate, and discovers that his new spiritual body allows him to pass through walls, doors, and other objects. A tinge of loneliness accompanies the bliss because he or she cannot communicate with those in the hospital room or surgical table.

Loneliness abates in the fourth stage when the psychic voyager meets other spiritual entities who assure that all is well. The individual may meet family members or

dear departed friends who beckon him or her to continue the journey toward greater community. The fifth state is the apex for the traveler. A ball of light appears, and draws closer until one is overwhelmed, and bathed in its splendor. The force is far from impersonal as Moody describes it:

"... not one person has expressed any doubt whatsoever that it was a being, a being of light. Not only that, it is a personal being. It has a very definite personality. The love and warmth which emanate from this being to the dying person are utterly beyond words, and he feels completely surrounded by it, and taken up in it, completely at ease and accepted in the presence of this being. He (sic) senses an irresistible attraction to this light. He is ineluctably drawn to it."

The being of light may ask the individual questions about the meaning of his life. An all-

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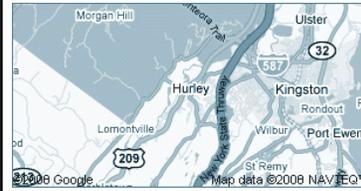
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encompassing review follows in which the patient's history flashes before him or her in a vivid, kaleidoscopic fashion. According to Moody, this being conforms to the individual's religious or philosophical understanding. Many believe the light is Christ or God. The sixth and final stage is somewhat anticlimactic. The individual is escorted to an impassable border and returns to his body where he rejoins the living—reluctantly.

Although a publishing success, Moody's book was not the first of its kind. In 1961, Karlis Osis wrote "Deathbed Observations by Patients and Nurses". Osis mailed questionnaires to thousands of helping professionals, then performed a computer analysis on the responses. His findings anticipated Moody's work, although the out-of-body phase and the mysterious being of light were conspicuously absent in his results. Nor did he discover Moody's sequential stages, which I believe was linchpin to the latter's publishing success. Thus Alexander's work has antecedents in the 20th, and even in the 19th, century when physicians studied the NDE of mountaineers who took life-threatening falls in the Alps.

In 1985 I wrote a book about death and dying. I devoted a chapter to the NDE. At that time I had reservations. The question for me then and now is how can we view Scripture and faith in the other-worldly light of the NDE? More particularly, how does the NDE shape our understanding of the Christian God, and the kind of heaven which Scripture describes?

An initial problem with NDE is the all encompassing being of light. Can this be the Almighty and/or his beloved Son? Back in the late 70's, and early 80's skeptical theologians believed that Raymond



Local Missions

Linda Dux, Chair

The Salvation Army of Kingston will be the recipient of our

Mission offerings for October. In November the local Salvation Army will host their annual Thanksgiving dinner for the many unfortunately folks in the area and we can help with this huge endeavor by contributing what we can in our Mission envelope, found in our box or in the pew.

Thank you for sharing your blessings with those who do not have as much.

Moody's god told us more about cultural perception about what we hoped God would be rather than the Holy One described in the Old and New Testaments. Princeton Seminary theologian Daniel Migliore represented the view of many when he wrote:

Does the "Being of Light" resemble, functionally speaking, a sympathetic therapist or sensitivity-group leader? Is the message that everything is OK, that even in our most selfish acts we were learning and growing, and that "self-realization" is the ultimate end of life really so unlike what we should have expected in a society saturated with cults of therapy and a philosophy of self-realization?

A problem which derives from God as Non-Judgmental Therapist is what does one do with the God of justice who we find in Scripture? If the NDE is our common lot—and this is the implicit assumption behind the NDE books—then why need one

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**STICKLEY
GARDENS**

FOR MORE INFORMATION – CONTACT ANY OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

LISA LONGTO (331-1438) CHAIRPERSON JIM PIRRO (383-0079) TREASURER ESTHER STICKLEY (331-2919)
SANDIE GREGORY (338-7626) DIANA CLINE (338-7276) CONSISTORY LIAISON REV STICKLEY, SECRETARY

A SACRED PLACE OF BEAUTY AND CONTEMPLATION. (LOCATED ON THE SOUTH LAWN OF THE CHURCH)



"Magnificent E's" Bible Study meets on Tuesday at 7:00pm and Wednesday at 7:30am in the Dutch Room. We are studying the ministries of Elijah and Elisha as presented in 1 and 2 Kings.

Finance Committee

Jim Mayfield, Chair

Save-the-Date (Monday, October 28) for an upcoming informational session!

Our financial advisor, Susan Murphy from Merrill Lynch, has offered to hold an informational session on gift giving. Our church has been blessed with generous gifts to our memorial funds from both current members and those that have gone before us. These gifts have allowed us to undertake some important projects, such as the lift project. Susan will talk about ways to gift during your lifetime or by developing an estate plan. She'll discuss the tax advantages in detail of both strategies. She will also discuss ways to protect and preserve your assets while ensuring they are distributed in the way you envision. Susan is extremely knowledgeable in this area, and is able to present the information in an understandable fashion for those of us not so knowledgeable in this area. While advice such as this can benefit the church, it can also help make sure your family is provided for in the manner you intend. The date for this session is 7:00 on Monday, October 28. We will begin a sign up to make sure if we enough interest, and please let us know if you have any questions.

It's not too late to participate in Operation Christmas Child. Contact Sandie Gregory for more information and pick up your shoebox.



**Help
Wanted**

Stone House Day Committee needs help! We need two people - a publicity person and coordinator of hosts/hostesses. Our wonderful

Stone House Day won't happen unless we all pitch in. See Ellen Richards for more information.

live a God-fearing, moral life on earth? And what of hell? Actually in the New Testament the term is Gehenna, taken from the Valley of Hinnom abutting Jerusalem which served as a trash dump where fires burned continually. Jesus talks about Gehenna as a destiny for the wicked (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5). Doesn't the NDE dismiss Jesus' understanding? If there's no hell and only heaven will we be sharing the same numinous eagle's wing with Hitler, Stalin, and Mao—Christianity's arch enemies, and the three greatest blood-letters in human history?

These questions seemed more important to me in 1985 than they do now. I'm less concerned with the God who judges fairly than the God who loves unstintingly regardless of our ethical track record, or the strength of our faith. My new stance may not be an advance—forgive me, Lord, if it's not!—but, for me, it is part and parcel of, perhaps, a larger, more compassionate understanding of reality accrued through the wonder and joy of aging.

Since coming to Hurley several people have told me that their NDE strengthened faith, and freed them from death's fear laced grip. The NDE has helped some understand that their earthly lives have pro-

found meaning and that God's call for them, in light of this experience, is to live simply, fully and hopefully. And what of hell? Should we dismiss the concept? I don't think so. Perhaps we need to tweak it a little, or a lot. Suppose, let's suppose that on that heavenly eagle's wing one experiences a sort of hell as one rafts toward the heart of God. What if hell is self-realization? Posthumously we understand what eluded us throughout our earthly journey: The richness our earthly lives could have been, the joy in serving the Lord which could have brought balm and healing to our wounded world, if only, if only we had not negated, dismissed, rejected or overlooked the lives God called us to live because of selfishness, greed, hardness of heart, or a granite like unbelief. Suppose, as we wing our way toward the heart of God, we realize, for the first time, who we were meant to be, and the opportunities, and spiritual joys so recklessly squandered.

Finally let's suppose that heaven is not static or inert, a place where people do little more than strum harps. Suppose heaven negates hell by offering us, in our painfully self-realized states, the opportunity to become what we failed to be in this earthly life—the unique being God lovingly designed. Suppose our pilgrim journey continues

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beyond our earthly life, and that heaven is dynamic, fluid, and open to an unlimited future where we unite more fully to the One who gave us life and hope from the beginning. In the Gospel of John Jesus says to his disciples: "In my father's heavenly house are many rooms" (14:2). The Greek word for 'rooms' can also be translated as 'weigh stations', or 'temporary dwellings'. I like the idea. I pray that heaven affords me opportunity to grow and move closer and closer to the pulse of my pulse, to the heart thump of my heart, to the very God who formed all of us in the shining image of Jesus Christ our winged Savior and Lord.



Boy Scout Troop 20 will be collecting non-perishable food on a regular bases. A box is located in Schade-wald Hall. Please - no glass or expired food! The Scouts will deliver the food to three area food banks & shelters. If you have any questions please see a boy scout or David Emrich.





Kyle Davenport	2, '01	Muriel Ferraro	6	Nancy Sweeney	28
Hannah Shambo	8, '03	William Henning	7	ANNIVERSARIES	
Sierra Butler	15, '98	Charlotte Gill	9	October	
Jasper Fox, Jr.	19, '10	Terry Gaffken	10	Pat & Robin Brennan	3
Ryan Milne	20, '06	Steve Bliss	10	Kathy & Craig Jansen	7
Julia Helm	27, '02	Eric Sullivan	10	Charles & Colette Woodard	8
Jordan Cline	28, '96	Stanley Brooks	14	Ron & Ann Every	9
Sandra Gregory	1	Marilyn More	15	Linda & Dick Shook	10
Lucas Hopper	2	Diana Cline	17	Jennifer & Jim Macarille	11
Amy Ryan	2	Lorraine Denis	18	Jack & Charlotte Gill	15
Megan Quezer	2	Nita Rockwell	20	Herb & Lois Morehouse	16
Christa Conlin	3	Ron Chrisey	20	Wendy & Steve Helsey	19
Leigh Hill	4	Julia Tucker	21	John & Marianne Mizel	21
Alissa Sumerano	5	Katie Christiana	22	Bill & Peg Baldinger	22
		Sarah Harder	22	Terry & John Gaffken	23
		Kelsey Christiana	24	Emily & Art Harder	26
		Linda Cook	25	Betty & Jim Pirro	30
		Helen Webber	26		



**Church
DIRECTORY**

The Lifetouch Photos have all been taken for our upcoming Photo Directory. Thank you so much to everyone who participated by having their photo taken.

We are now in the process of compiling the updated info and photographing the last of the committees and activities to submit for set-up and printing.

We are all looking forward to the new Directory – we will keep you informed.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

To each wonderful Church Member who helped with the check-ins for the photo sessions for our upcoming Photo Directory. And *Thank You* to all the members that helped in other ways.

Debbie Tucker, Chair



We have shawls that were carefully prayed over while being knitted. If you know anyone in need, please contact us or the office. Many thanks to those knitters who have supported this ministry.

Lee Gable and Linda Dido



**Congregational
Meeting**

Sunday, November 17

Immediately after worship



CLEAN UP DAY
Saturday, Oct. 12, 2013

8:45 Coffee, Juice & Sweets

9:00 Work Assignments & Q&A

General Clean Up

Painting

Raking

For more information see

Jim Pirro, Dennis Crowell or Dave Giles

See list of projects & sign up in Schadewald Hall

The Women's Guild will be publishing a new church cookbook and needs your recipe donations. Any type of recipe is welcome. Please give your donations to Roberta Falatyn or email: rfalatyn@falahome.com.

admin@hurleyreformedchurch.org, Hurley Reformed Church, US Holidays

Oct 2013 (Eastern Time)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
10am - Worship @ 11am - Prayer Chain 1pm - Joyride @ Bike	9am - Myer School 5pm - Dog Training 7pm - Little League 7:30pm - 1st Capitol 7:30pm - Al-Anon @	8:30am - Hillsdale 9:30am - Badminton 4pm - Hurley Puriers 4:30pm - PC 101 @ 7pm - Bible Study @ 7pm - Boy Scouts	7:30am - Bible 9:30am - Hospital 5:30pm - Dog 6pm - Cub Scout 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ 6:30pm - Girl Scout 7pm - Boy Scouts	9:30am - Badminton 1:30pm - Hurley 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 7:30pm - Choir	7pm - HVICA @ Hall	Clean Up Day 10am - Genealogy @
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
10am - Worship @ 11am - VFW @	Columbus Day 11am - VFW @	9:30am - Badminton 4pm - Hurley Puriers 7pm - Bible Study @ 7pm - Boy Scouts	7:30am - Bible 5:30pm - Dog 6pm - Cub Scout 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ 7pm - Hurley Lions 7:45pm - Bagpiper	9:30am - Badminton 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 7pm - NE 7:30pm - Choir	5pm - Woodworkers	8am - Woodworkers 6pm - 40th
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
10am - Worship @ 11am - Women's	10am - Genealogy @ 5pm - Dog Training 6pm - Foundation 7:30pm - Al-Anon @	9:30am - Badminton 4pm - Hurley Puriers 7pm - Bible Study @ 7pm - Boy Scouts	7:30am - Bible 5:30pm - Dog 6pm - Cub Scout 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ 7:45pm - Bagpiper	9:30am - Badminton 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 7:30pm - Choir	3pm - Library 6:30pm - Ghost	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
10am - Worship - 1pm - Private @ Hall	10:30am - Genealog 5pm - Dog Training 7pm - Finance 7:30pm - Al-Anon @	9:30am - Badminton 4pm - Hurley Puriers 7pm - Bible Study @ 7pm - Boy Scouts	7:30am - Bible 10am - Flu Clinic @ 5:30pm - Dog 6pm - Cub Scout 6pm - Den 1 Bears @ 7:45pm - Bagpiper	Halloween 9:30am - Badminton 3pm - Quilting @ 4:45pm - Dog 7:30pm - Choir		
27	28	29	30	31	1	2

October 2013

HURLEY REFORMED
CHURCH

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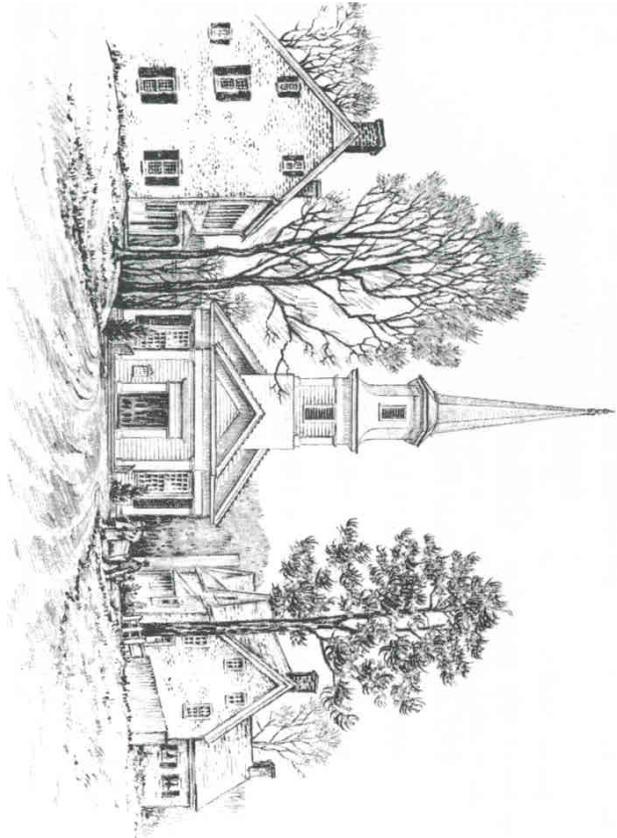
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The Rev. Dr. Robert L. Gram, LCSW
Pastor

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