



W I D E H O R I Z O N
A CHRISTIAN SCIENCE NURSING CARE FACILITY

Acknowledging the Shepherding, Nursing Activity of Divine Love

Keynote Address at Wide Horizon Annual Meeting on September 18, 2011

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Not too long ago, representatives of the nationwide Christian Science nursing community gathered where we are today. When they looked westward, many understood better why this facility is named Wide Horizon and why hymn 218 is its signature song—“the wide horizon’s grander view.” Among definitions for grand, here’s a favorite of mine: “that which elevates and expands the mind.”

This is a grand gathering place. Whenever gathering is impelled by divine Love, it bears good fruit. Evil tries to scatter the flock. Shepherding Love gathers the flock. True gathering is never random. It’s designed to fulfill a divine purpose. It’s meant to be useful. The Master Christian teaches us: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt 18: 20) We pray earnestly, don’t we, for the Christ, Truth to be in the very midst of our gatherings as active cause and moving force, as a palpable presence, a divine afflatus?

In “No and Yes,” our Leader, Mary Baker Eddy, refers to the aggregating activity of divine Science. Every instance of genuine aggregating, each evidence of useful coming together should be welcomed with thanks. When the apostle Paul is called to mentor Timothy! When the faithfulness of Ruth and Boaz unites them! When a practitioner and patient acknowledge a relevant truth together! When a Christian Science nurse enters a guest’s room, and both are blessed!

A spirit of acknowledgment is vital to progress. To recognize what benevolent Mind is showing and telling us, to gratefully receive divine gifts, to admit the truth of man’s being (and to deny lying sense testimony), to rightly estimate another’s expression of Christliness—these are hallmarks of true acknowledgment. Science and Health states explicitly: “In Christian Science, a denial of Truth is fatal, while a just acknowledgment of Truth and of what it has done for us is an effectual help.” (S&H 372: 26-29)

Infinite Love is the source of all true nursing qualities. The Bible teaches us: “We love him, because he first loved us.” (I John 4: 19) You and I love God and His daughters and sons, because God first loved us. We care for others, because the Father-Mother cares for us. God cares for our heart—keeps our motives pure, our ambitions noble, our affections enriched.

Nursing, in its highest sense, manifests the gentle presence of divine Love. Here’s an example: Years ago I was guided to call a friend who is a Christian Science nurse. I’d been struggling with an abnormal body rash, and felt I needed to know more about proper ways to cleanse it. Her counsel was simple and practical. Apply warm water and mild soap. Dry with soft cotton.

Then my friend added something that made all the difference: “Be sure to do it gently.” This comment awakened me. I’d been feeling anything but gentleness. Life seemed vexing and

harsh—until that one word gently lifted my thought to the inspiring message in Mrs. Eddy’s hymn: “O gentle presence, peace and joy and power; O Life divine, that owns each waiting hour...” The ideas in “Mother’s Evening Prayer” provided the key to my healing.

Be mindful of that one letter word, “O.” It’s often more than a throwaway introduction. It can express a spirit that acknowledges what God is and what God does for creation. “O Life that maketh all things new...”

To cherish something means to hold it dear, to treat it with tenderness and affection, to keep fondly in mind, to rightly estimate the worth of. So what are we to cherish above all else? A Christmas message in *Prose Works* answers this question definitively: “In different ages, the divine idea assumes different forms, according to humanity’s needs. In this age it assumes, more intelligently than ever before, the form of Christian healing. This is the babe we are to cherish. This is the babe that twines its loving arms about the neck of omnipotence, and calls forth infinite care from His loving heart.” (Mis. 370: 12)

Every Christian Scientist is a practitioner of this Science, Journal-listed or not. Furthermore, each Manual By-Law, including the one that provides for Christian Science nurses, is to be respected and heeded by all members of The Mother Church. Each one here is called to express the caring, nourishing, shepherding, nursing qualities. And we are privileged to acknowledge authentic nursing in action.

The close tie between Christ-healing and Christian Science nursing is illustrated in the life of a young man from Kenya who recently became a Journal-listed nurse. Over the past two years, Reagan has become like a member of our family. I’d like to share some of his story—not to acknowledge him personally—but rather because his life opens a window wider on the grand vocation of nursing.

When Reagan was a boy, an individual who’d recently found Christian Science at his Kenyan workplace, knocked on the door of the family home. He offered copies of *Science and Health*—an offer graciously accepted by Reagan’s parents. In Reagan’s own words: “It was very sweet to learn of the new teachings, and by the time the man was leaving our home, I knew that Christian Science is what I needed. I keenly read *Science and Health* and took in all the teachings about my relationship to God.”

Healing ensued of a severe ailment that had limited Reagan and challenged his family. As a result of this wonderful healing, the family united with others to form a Christian Science Society in the area, and Reagan joined The Mother Church and took class instruction from an authorized teacher living in Kenya.

Acknowledgment includes giving something in return for benefits received. A short poem titled, “Christmas Gift,” from the book, *Ideas on Wings*, says this beautifully:

“Here is a Christmas gift, O God.

For You and Your dear Son.

It is my life: may it show forth

What Your great gift has done.”

As Reagan prayed for ways to fully acknowledge his healing, he considered becoming a Christian Science nurse. When we met him, he was halfway through a three-year training course at the Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association. A few months ago he completed this course. This accomplishment required patience, dedication, and faith, including the willingness to be away from his wife and two young sons for over three years.

The passage in *Science and Health* that refers most specifically to nurses starts by describing mortal traits to be avoided, followed by enumerating qualities to be embraced. “An ill-tempered, complaining, or deceitful person should not be a nurse. The nurse should be cheerful, orderly, punctual, patient, full of faith, —receptive to Truth and Love.” (S&H 395: 17)

Getting to know Reagan has given my wife, Sharon, and me fresh perspective on nursing qualities all Christian Scientists can and should embody. For example:

- Blessedness. In his Bible Commentary, Dummelow defines blessedness as “an inward fountain of joy in the soul itself, which no outward circumstance can seriously affect.” Early in our friendship Reagan confided that when he enters a home, he silently and consciously acknowledges divine Love’s blessing on those who dwell within. I suspect he follows the same pattern before entering a guest’s room at a nursing facility. This is fitting because man lives and moves in God—in the light and favor of God’s benediction.

Reagan has a good grasp on the idea of mutual blessing. This concept finds early Biblical expression in Genesis when God promises Abraham that he will be both blessed and a blessing. (See Gen. 12: 2) An African proverb describes mutual blessing simply: “When the right hand washes the left, the right becomes clean also.”

- Forgiveness. Reagan says that every day he forgives something. It may be a moral debt he owes another. Or a debt another owes him. None of us is here to nurse a grievance! Or to cling to or even cherish disappointment, anger, or self-pity. Many of the references in Mrs. Eddy’s writings speak, not only of what we should cherish (like the babe of Christian healing), but also of what we should not cherish. For example: “The Christian Scientist cherishes no resentment; he knows that that would harm him more than all the malice of his foes. Brethren, even as Jesus forgave, forgive thou. I say it with joy, —no person can commit an offense against me that I cannot forgive.” (1902 19: 8-12)

Each one is called to keep his or her account square with divine Love. Fuller obedience to portions of the Lord’s Prayer and its spiritual interpretation would go a long way toward solving the world’s debt crisis. “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And Love is reflected in love.”

You’ll be glad to know, that as we speak, Reagan is in Kenya visiting with his family. Recently, he e-mailed some thoughts about Christian Science nursing.

- “A nurse should be spiritually pure so as not to be carried away by the picture presented, but rather behold the perfect man from the beginning to the end of care.
- Nurses need to constantly seek guidance from divine Principle, and always stay spiritually pure to fend off any fear, since patients look to them for encouragement.
- Christian Science nursing is based on the golden rule.”

Our daily calling to express and acknowledge the shepherding, nursing activity of divine Love is enriched by Scriptural teachings. The life of Hannah is instructive in the regard. Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, feared that she would always be childless. For a time, she appeared to nurse a heavy sense of grief over this, along with a temptation to feel worthless.

To her credit, however, Hannah responded to divine Love’s impelling to go higher. (Hymn 324 which begins, “Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee” goes on to point out that we are moved “at the impulse of Thy love.”) Hannah makes a vow in the presence of Eli, the priest, that if God will grant her a son, she will consecrate his life to the service of the Lord.

Hannah provides an early Biblical example of silent prayer—the kind of heartfelt prayer of desire that divine Love hears and fashions and answers. The Bible says: “Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; ...her lips moved, but her voice was not heard.” (See I Sam. 1: 13)

After the birth of Samuel, Hannah nursed him until he was weaned—literally weaned, but more important, symbolically so, until he was ready to take his appointed place as a prophet in training. After sending him to Eli, Hannah would see Samuel only at the time of the yearly sacrifice. Yet she never lost her link of affection to her son. Our Leader teaches us tenderly: “The beautiful in character is also the good, welding indissolubly the links of affection. A mother’s affection cannot be weaned from her child, because the mother-love includes purity and

constancy, both of which are immortal. Therefore maternal affection lives on under whatever difficulties.” (S&H 60: 6)

Hannah finds appropriate ways to manifest this affection. Her story continues: “Moreover his mother made him (Samuel) a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.” (I Sam. 2: 19)

Science and Health speaks not only of divine Love’s bestowals, but also of Love’s adaptation. “Love is impartial and universal in its adaptation and bestowals. (S&H 13: 2-3)

What divine Love pours forth in answer to righteous prayer is fitting—“Love’s work and Love must fit,” as hymn 51 puts it. In symbolic terms, if a size four coat is needed, Love doesn’t supply a size 3. The need is met by Love in ways that are just right.

Question: What does the life of Christ Jesus have to do with Christian Science nursing? We might say that his mission and example has significance for every Manual-based activity of The Mother Church! We acknowledge him to be our Way-shower. His life certainly sheds light on how to express healing and nursing qualities.

Healing and shepherding and nursing qualities can’t be separated. Jesus teaches us: “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine...My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10: 14, 27) One who follows the shepherding Christ is not a hireling. He or she doesn’t desert the flock when a wolf appears.

A good shepherd feeds his flock. Throughout his earthly mission, Jesus does this. While he doesn’t neglect the basic human need for food, he clearly hopes that people will look for more than the loaves and fishes. Who will grasp that he has spiritual nutriment to give, the substantial bread of Truth, the pure water of Life, the inspiring wine of Love?

Our textbook teaches us: “The poor suffering heart needs its rightful nutriment, such as peace, patience in tribulation, and a priceless sense of the dear Father’s loving-kindness.” (S&H 365: 31) When it comes to feeding, most of all, it is our affections that must be fed and enriched.

Animal magnetism has been defined as a state of altered attention. It claims to distract at every turn. It tries to divert attention from what most needs doing. Animal magnetism would, if it could, invite us to spend extra time and energy planting and reaping in field A, just when God is directing us to sow and harvest in field B. Pray each day to be delivered from the diversions and deceptions of evil. Pray to be about your Father’s business. Keep your focus!

Christ Jesus provides the definitive statement on priorities. In his Sermon on the Mount, he refers to legitimate human needs—food, clothing, and so on. Then he states: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt 6: 33) As our priorities are in order, as God’s kingdom consciousness is our number one priority, the rest will be added naturally (whether they are daily necessities, friendships, right activity, adequate finances).

Mankind is tempted to reverse the Master’s statement. That is, to seek first those things which should be added. And to add (like a kind of accessory or p.s.) that which should be sought. When a clear, consistent sense of priorities prevails, we are less apt to fall into the trap of substituting the lesser for the greater. In the nursing work, and in life generally, guard against substituting food for spiritual nutriment, house for home, sleep for rest, money for supply. In church work, let’s not substitute organization for movement, opinions for inspiration, even excessive study for demonstration.

Keep your eye on the greater, and what is needful and supportive in human experience will follow, as it should. Faithful disciples avoid the rebuke of our Master’s words: “...for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” (Matt 23: 23)

(A note: when raising funds, we often speak of matching funds. As valuable as these can be, I’d like to also propose the idea of a spiritual matching fund. That is, when making a

monetary contribution to Wide Horizon, let's match it with prayer for the prosperity of Christian Science healing and nursing. Let's match it with a prayer to recognize the operation of Mind's scientific law of multiplication.)

So far we've talked a fair amount about nursing. Let's share some ideas now about nurseries. In a manner of speaking, nursing often occurs within a nursery. Have you ever thought about Wide Horizon as a kind of nursery? For this to have validity, let's go beyond the world's definition of the term. Both nursing and nurseries should be viewed as large, expansive ideas.

Decades ago, Sharon and I served as Peace Corps volunteers in Chile. I've always been interested in things that grow, and fittingly my work there had to do with forestry—conserving trees and planting new ones. Many a tree nursery sprouted in our corner of Chile. We would begin by carefully preparing the soil. Then we'd look for the best seeds available. When seedlings appeared, they received extra care. You might say they benefited from high quality nursing. The trees were watered generously. Weeds tried to retard the growth of the trees, and had to be uprooted on a recurring basis. In Biblical terms, tares needed to be separated wisely and well from the valuable wheat.

(A note: In the gospel of John, Jesus teaches that he is the vine, his followers are the branches, and his Father is the husbandman. When planting tree nurseries, I was conscious of the Father's husbanding role, and recognized that by reflection man expresses husbanding qualities. Nursery tasks are to be managed with wisdom, care, and sound economy. A good husbandman is a good steward, and a good steward is a good shepherd.)

At a certain point, trees in our nurseries were ready to be transplanted to places where they could continue to develop and be useful (providing shade, timber, erosion control). Practitioners and Wide Horizon staff cherish a similar hope for every guest who arrives here—a prayer for each one to experience Christ-healing and continuing opportunities for spiritual progress and service.

Years ago, I gave extra thought to the idea of the seed within itself. Early in my exploration, I surveyed children's books that talked about nature's seeds—and discovered that most all seeds have the same two defining characteristics; each has a vital growth center, capable of development, and each has a protective covering of some sort. This basic information opened a window on reality itself.

Metaphysically viewed, each individual is capable of unlimited development—and each is blessed by the sustaining, protecting presence of divine Love. Unfoldment within the enfoldment of benevolent Mind. In spiritual terms, a true nursery has the qualities of a divinely designed mental home; what the 23rd Psalm calls the house of the Lord—Love's true consciousness. Individuals who are part of the Wide Horizon community, guests and staff alike, are meant to feel “cared for, watched over, beloved and protected,” as hymn 278 states it.

A true nursery represents the atmosphere of Soul, a dwelling place where Christian healing thrives. Man is blessed by Soul's atmosphere. It permeates his being. He freely breathes it in.

By reflecting Soul, each individual contributes to a healing atmosphere. A Manual provision which delineates the moral obligations of church readers states: “They must keep themselves unspotted from the world, — uncontaminated with evil, — that the mental atmosphere they exhale shall promote health and holiness, even that spiritual *animus* so universally needed.” (Man. 31: 9)

Purity and innocence are essential. So is temperance. You'll recall that Science and Health says that a nurse should not be ill tempered. Ditto for each of us! Without a doubt our world needs more light and less heat. No one should be adding fuel to any type of destructive fire.

Abraham Lincoln had a favorite story about a circuit court judge who would travel about dispensing justice. The judge was returning home one night in a storm. The lightning seemed far enough away, but suddenly a clap of thunder struck so near that its noise spooked his horse and

deposited the judge in a big mud puddle. When he got to his feet, he looked to the heavens and plaintively asked, “Lord, if it’s all the same to You, could we please have a little more light and a little less noise.”

The terms tempest (as in a threatening storm), temper, temperature, and temperance come from the same root. More temperance—a Soul-inspired moderation—is requisite in our dealings with others. It is, as you remember, one of the fruits of the Spirit. After detailing harmful mortal traits, Paul writes: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” (Gal. 5: 22, 23)

A proper atmosphere is conducive to spiritual unfoldment, and spiritual growth is essential to healing demonstration. Each of us can take heart from this statement of absolute Truth in our textbook: “God expresses in man the infinite idea forever developing itself, broadening and rising higher and higher from a boundless basis.” (S&H 258: 13-15) This is not an abstract statement. Today provides specific opportunities to prove more of this great truth in your human experience.

In one of his letters, Paul speaks of comprehending the breadth, length, depth, and height of reality. (See Eph. 3: 17-19) As the finite progressively yields to the infinite, an expanding love evidences itself in daily life. Mrs. Eddy writes: “With additional joys, benevolence should grow more diffusive.” (S&H 58: 14-16)

Links of affection, yes! Mere personal attachment, no! Spiritual individuality, yes! Material personality, no! The book, Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer, includes a dictation from her to Calvin Frye: “Watch and be sure that your love is increasing and your false sense of personality is diminishing and make everything you say and do tend to produce this effect.” (p. 397) The very name Wide Horizon points toward a more unselfed love—toward the spiritual breadth referenced by Paul. A university chaplain once said: “There is no smaller package than a man all wrapped up in himself.”

God maintains and sustains man. This fact undergirds our expression of length—length that manifests itself in a steady continuity in our lives. None should settle to be, to paraphrase our Leader, like a summer stream that soon runs dry. (Hymn 224: “When all material streams are dried, Thy fullness is the same.”)

Who among us doesn’t wish increasing depth of spiritual understanding? We live in an age when the inadequacy of superficiality or shallow spiritual roots is increasingly apparent. Spiritual depth is part of our untouchable core—that which untouched by the mutable and mortal. The height that Paul refers to often signifies fresh inspiration and new views. Circling the base of life’s mountain only provides the illusion of progress. When we climb higher, we see farther.

The following reference to nurseries is included in Science and Health: “Nurseries of character should be strongly garrisoned with virtue.” (S&H 235: 10-11) This portion of the textbook makes plain that among schoolteachers, physicians, nurses, and clergymen, a moral and spiritual culture is imperative.

A woman called a practitioner to thankfully acknowledge help received and healing experienced. In response, the practitioner thanked her for taking a stand. Wide Horizon and its staff are to be thanked for taking a stand on behalf of Christian Science care and treatment. “A Christian Scientist’s medicine is Mind, the divine Truth that makes man free.” (S&H 453: 29-30)

In our society, drugs enslave many people. Drugs too often attain the status of little gods. Science and Health not only says that mortals must learn to abandon material pharmaceuticals. It also states that the pharmacy of the true system of Mind-healing is moral. (See S&H 460: 8) Don’t you love that concept?

The healing ideas of divine Mind are to be dispensed in a completely moral way—with honesty and compassion, with the highest degree of Christian ethics. With care that the mental

medicine provided is consistent and without contradictory side effects. With a sincere desire that even the doses are proper.

Did you know that the Science and Health passage about giving a cup of cold water is based on Jesus' words to this effect? (See Matt.10: 42). We wisely listen to give a cup's worth. Among other things, this may mean not dispensing a whole bucketful, especially when doing so might provoke an unhealthy reaction or even undermine the recipient's capacity to hear directly from God. Additionally, we seek to give a cup of cold water in Christ's name—water that is refreshing and inspiring. Who wants to dispense lukewarm water that has lost potency by standing too long on the surface of thought?

If our work ever seems heavy or in vain, we can take heart from our Master's final instructions to his disciples. First, "cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." Stay close to the divine source. Value the pastor. (The original meaning of pastor is shepherd). As our Leader's hymn tells us, the Shepherd shows us how to gather.

Second, "come and dine." Accept Christ's daily invitation to feed your own affections with the grace of God. (The Greek word for grace found throughout the New Testament means "the divine influence on the heart, and its reflection in the life"). "Come and dine." Daily assimilate the divine Word—the creative, self-revealing, thoughts and will of God. Let the Word replenish you. Make it your own. Shepherd, show me how to sow in my own conscious being.

Prepared spiritually, we're ready to give of our abundance—to feed Christ's lambs and Christ's sheep. Every member of the flock sometimes needs the pure spiritual milk that sustains lamb-like innocence and genuine childlikeness. This, of course, in no way argues for neglect of the strong meat without which no sheep can continue to progress. Shepherd, show me how to feed Thy lambs and sheep.

This passage from Science and Health abides: "It is possible, —yea, it is the duty and privilege of every child, man, and woman, —to follow in some degree the example of the Master by the demonstration of Truth and Love, of health and holiness." (S&H 37: 22-25)

The duty to demonstrate is inescapable. To do so successfully, there are commands to obey, scientific rules to follow, Manual provisions to live by. "Duty and privilege." Do remember that demonstration is also a privilege. All who conscientiously accept the duties and demands of citizenship in God's kingdom are attended by the privilege of demonstration.

A citizen in the kingdom is privileged to claim man's inalienable rights—self-government, reason, and conscience, for starters. And also, God-bestowed rights of dominion, dignity, health and wholeness, justice, immunity from hatred and fear, hallowed thought, spiritual happiness, security, life and liberty. To claim these rights goes way beyond the world's sense of entitlement. It involves taking firm possession of our God-given heritage.

You are privileged to identify yourself as a beneficiary, not a victim. One of David's Psalms underscores this: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." This Psalm continues by citing specific benefits from God (Ps. 103: 2-5):

- Who forgiveth all thine iniquities
- Who healeth all thy diseases
- Who redeemeth thy life from destruction
- Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies
- Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's

We've reached the Amen point of this talk. Let's add the Alleluia by singing together hymn 218. "O Life that maketh all things new, the blooming earth, the thoughts of men..."

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