

GINNY NILSEN—Eugene, Oregon

Next in our biweekly series on how people have nurtured their public practice of Christian Science.



CHUCK GRAYTON

A CENTRAL FOCUS

MY FIRST CHRISTIAN SCIENCE practitioner's office was my kitchen. That was 27 years ago. The Bible, *Science and Health*, and other writings of Mary Baker Eddy were kept in a cupboard above the telephone. I set this office up the same day I came home from taking Christian Science class instruction, a 12-day course on how to heal through prayer. From that point on, I considered myself to be in the public practice of Christian Science.

Two years earlier, I had first heard about Christian Science practitioners at a potluck dinner given by the owner of the health-food store where I worked. At the time, I was also a health educator and counselor for a large HMO, and had looked into many spiritual teachings in an effort to improve my health. Simultaneously, I taught yoga, led meditation groups, and gave holistic health seminars.

So when one of the guests at that dinner told me his wife was a Christian Science practitioner, I was intrigued and asked him what practitioners did. He answered, "They heal through prayer." Throughout the next few months, I would occasionally wonder, How does praying for someone heal a physical body? I had been struggling with many physical and emotional problems, one of which was considered incurable.

Alone one day, I collapsed on the floor and lost consciousness. I awoke to repeated thoughts to call my friend's wife—the Christian Science practitioner—which I finally did a couple of days later. And I began meeting with her on a regular basis. As I learned more about Christian Science, I had a quick healing of a severely sprained ankle. Prayer also brought quick eradication of fleas after my cat and home became infested. Voraciously, I read *Science and Health* and the Christian Science magazines. For the first time, I had hope that my longstanding physical and emotional problems could be completely healed, too.

As I felt the presence of God within my consciousness, a deep peace and view of heaven on earth became tangible to me. The physical and emotional problems began to dissolve, and I found I was freed from despair and hopelessness. Longstanding migraines, vision loss, and the condition considered medically incurable were soon completely healed. As I continued to read *Science and Health*, I was moved by this radical statement,

"Jesus restored Lazarus by the understanding that Lazarus had never died, not by an admission that his body had died and then lived again" (p. 75). It was awe-inspiring to connect with the ideas in this passage, since I'd been learning that the substance of my being was spiritual. And because of this, I'd always been living in the kingdom of heaven, Spirit, not in matter. With this revelation of eternal life, and of my true spiritual identity, I knew there was nothing else for me to do but devote my life to helping others through Christian Science.

A few years later, I took Christian Science class instruction and set up that modest kitchen office. Soon, I was invited to share a practitioner's office downtown and also began to use a new space at home that my husband built for me. After I began advertising in *The Christian Science Journal*, I moved a few more times, and now I occupy an office across from a university, in a facility that gives students access to religious and Biblical education.

When my Christian Science branch church asked me to be a community liaison, I began to get involved in interfaith work and to receive patients from the interfaith community who requested Christian Science treatment. I've also hosted *Science and Health* reading groups downtown. Now, once a month, I hold potluck dinners and dialogue circles with the interfaith group in my home, which allows me to share the understanding of God that supports spiritual healing. These interfaith activities also help me be alert to issues needing prayerful attention in the community and for the world. With my healing practice as the central focus of my days, sharing the ideas found in *Science and Health* gives me the opportunity to plant seeds of love and understanding, watch them grow, and witness healing.

Thinking about that first tiny office space, my books spread across the kitchen stove, I can't help but feel the deepest gratitude for Christian Science. It was my life preserver at a time when I felt like I was drowning. What a heavenly adventure it is now to see my practice develop and grow! No matter what office I'm in, or what activity I'm doing, it's the healing taking place that counts. Learning more each day about God's love and power only increases my desire to help others through prayer. jcss

I BEGAN TO RECEIVE PATIENTS FROM THE INTERFAITH COMMUNITY WHO REQUESTED CHRISTIAN SCIENCE TREATMENT.