

# **The ABCs of Love for Jesus' Followers:**

## **Let's See Where Wisdom Points Us**

**By Art Nicol**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this booklet to all people of every age who have ever felt the pain of being bullied, putdown, unwelcome or in any way made to feel ashamed of who we are and how we feel. To all who have ever felt the secret fear of being unwanted within the families or other groups within which we want so desperately to belong, I extend the welcome of the Spirit of Truth that sets us free and Love that lets us be who we are – each a miraculous expression of the Creator.

I also dedicate this booklet to all courageous people of every age who have stood up to bullying and demonstrated their support as allies and advocates for those who are bullied.

Let us gather together to welcome every child, woman and man as Jesus welcomes us and asks us to welcome him. Although this booklet identifies Jesus' followers as its primary target audience, the ABCs of love are not only for Jesus' followers. They are for all of us who follow any path of faith in the Divine Presence who embraces all of humanity with unconditional love, grace and mercy. Although known by many names, there is only One Divine Presence. The ABCs of love are offered here to help us all to have a closer and more enriching relationship with the One Holy Creator and Sustainer of Life.

## **MAKING USE OF PROFESSIONAL HELP**

Studying and practicing the ABCs of love supplements but does not replace help provided by professional counselors, therapists, medical providers, alternative medicine practitioners and other caregivers. Do not rely upon your study and practice as a substitute for professional help that you may need. When the training and skills of professionals are needed, please do not allow pride, shame or any other excuse to cause you to avoid seeking and receiving the benefits of such assistance in being healthier. Your health matters because you have value! Let others help you value yourself. Consult professionals as needed to support your progress in becoming free to accept and love yourself.

## **CONTACTING THE AUTHOR**

Communications about the ABCs of love will reach me at [sent2art@gmail.com](mailto:sent2art@gmail.com). I welcome questions, comments, suggestions and other feedback for improving this booklet, presenting this material in any medium and helping others to join in making the ABCs of love their primary principles for living.

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## RECLAIMER NOT DISCLAIMER

The ABCs of love claim back our true nature from the pretenses of the ego's pride and shame. If you read this booklet from your ego's perspective alone, you may mistake it as another self-help book. It's not. It's a "let-us-help-each-other-with-God's help" book. All for One and One for all.

You benefit from studying the ABCs of Love by practicing them. You cannot practice alone. Self-helping yourself in isolation will not unpack the ABCs of love to reveal their full value. Studying this booklet is only one step you can take towards reaping its benefits. If you fail to share and practice love's principles with others, especially others who are also studying the ABCs of love, you'll miss out. Taking the first step of reading this booklet without taking the second step of practicing the ABCs of love with your co-students is like a bird's trying to fly by flapping only one wing. Imagine it. While flapping only one wing, the bird moves only in circles on the ground. It may flounder on the ground like a wounded bird but it will never soar upward nor move forward with its flock.

To switch metaphors, reaping the ABC's crop of love requires that you move into love's field together with others to engage in the interplay of harvesting. Solo harvesters may bring home a few seed-ideas but will fail to bring home the life-enriching harvest of love ripening to be gathered into our hearts and minds. They'll also miss out on savory breads. Only a group can grind and sift our grains of truth into flour, activate the flour by mixing it in open dialogue with the water of life and blend in Spirit's yeast to cause the dough to rise. Passionate discussions provide heat to bake the bread. Work and play together with the ABCs of love as a crop worthy of our devotion and commit to cultivating, harvesting, grinding, sifting, blending, baking and sharing the bread of life we prepare together.

This cautionary word about the nature of the booklet is a "reclaimer" because it reclaims the truth of humanity's dynamic unity or oneness as an essential condition for wisdom to be harvested, blended into life and shared by all. The process of growing through shared experiences reveals our nature as beings of love. To share love as God defines love is required for us to know the divinity of our nature and no longer mistake ourselves as less. We have the choice of going around always putting each other down and end up down together or we can go forward lifting each other up and be lifted to new heights together. We each have a choice to be part of the downdraft or part of the uplift. Let's reclaim our natural heritage by reaping and soaring together to co-create heaven on earth.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY GROUP PRACTICES

- As you study this booklet, keep a journal of your feelings and thoughts as you reflect on each topic. Recording feelings and ideas helps you to be more aware of them and to value them more highly.
- Consider how you can share feelings and thoughts with others in ways that feel helpful for you. The primary rules of healthy (love-based) relationships are "Trust, Feel and Talk about things that matter."\* Gently encourage yourself to explore these rules in your study group. With practice, you'll discover how to manage sharing with others in ways that work for you.

\*See, Black, Claudia, It Will Never Happen to Me, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Hazelden, Center City, MN 2002 (Especially, Chapter 3)

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## Preface

This booklet presents how we are all beloved children of God and how to grow in power, courage and joy as Jesus encourages us to do. It shows how to connect with our natural inner resources even when our outer resources seem overstretched. And it shows how to develop and sustain a life flowing with love, liberty and laughter while we explore ever-expanding and more satisfying relationships. Relating on God's terms leads us to live in harmony with each other and with all realms of Nature. The purpose of this booklet is not to "explain" everything but to stimulate dialogues of discovery among students of love as we move forward together to co-create a transformed world of love. Use this booklet to join with others in practicing the principles of the ABCs of love to master them by heart. Practice encourages us to "trust, feel and talk about things that matter" as God's family members.

Although this booklet focuses on U.S. readers who believe in Jesus, it also sheds light for all who may want to learn more about Jesus and his invitation to join him in God's caring family. Many write about Jesus, his teachings and his invitation from a wide array of viewpoints. To be more fully informed, it would be best for you to read and study other resources because this booklet is not a comprehensive source of information about all possible topics. Others have written much more. Let this booklet serve as a compass, map and headlamp as you explore the full nature of love's mysteries in depth.

This booklet introduces Jesus' basic ideas about the most excellent way of life that God's divine love and grace energize and govern. It presents these ideas in words commonly used in the English-speaking world. I hope my choice of words and images helps you to more completely understand what others write about Jesus and his ideas. Let's awaken from our ignorance and quit betraying Jesus, ourselves and God. Jesus once said of those who betrayed him, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He was confident that God forgives those who act in ignorance. Today there is no excuse for remaining ignorant of the simple truth that frees us to live with God and serve each other as Jesus models. As God's children, whether believer or non-believer, we betray love's power and its Source when we fail to be true to ourselves and the One Who Created Us to walk on earth as Jesus once walked. Let's stop betraying our loved ones and Nature and instead step out boldly as followers hot on Jesus' trail in our quest for love's full power to comfort, heal and bless the world.

Key ideas in this booklet include 1) the ego is a false identity we substitute for our true identity as children of God and 2) Western thinking causes us to think of life in divisions rather than as a whole and trains us to think in terms of separate categories we label based on comparisons of differences. This way of thinking emphasizes the significance of differences and downplays the role of similarities, dynamics and relationships. We will unpack the implications of these ideas throughout our exploration of the ABCs of love. Using Western thinking in its most simplistic form, ego trains us to think in terms of opposites. Love invites us to think in terms of relationship. Thus love asks not "How do A and B differ or compare?" but "How do A and B relate?" Love's focus on relationship allows us to see more clearly how love relates to fear and how to enjoy life's paradoxes when it seems impossible to reconcile differences.

## Introduction

At times you've likely wondered whether all you've been told is entirely true. This booklet confirms that there's more to life than you've been taught or yet know. If you accept mystery as part of life, then your life can be a lifelong quest for truth. By studying and practicing the ABCs of love you will see how your discoveries create desirable improvements in your life and find motivation to discard false ideas in favor of true ones. I encourage you to examine your beliefs for fear-based ones and let love-based ideas take root in your mind instead. In your heart, seeds of love are already present. That is why you yearn to cultivate a life-enriching crop of love. It is up to you how much you retrain your mind to weed out lies and half-truths. It will always be your choice because God gave you free will. It's your privilege to use this gift wisely and boldly to cultivate your lifestyle field to enjoy lifelong freedom to love as your heart desires.

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. made a wise, bold choice to focus upon God, Jesus and truth. He listened to God's spirit and shared divinely inspired ideas he received. In his "I Have a Dream" speech, MLK Jr. shared a vision of society in which children would no longer be judged by the color of their skin. Calling this society the "beloved community," he held out God's ideal. It's the same ideal that Jesus still holds out. The ABCs of love carry out MLK Jr.'s vision and expand it to look to a society that no longer judges anyone by any trait that we'd not want God or anyone to use to judge us. They show us how to "seek first the kingdom of God" with its divinely defined unconditional love and justice. In this way, the ABCs of love reveal the overlap between MLK Jr.'s vision and Jesus' vision for human society.

The ABCs of love show us how to let go of lifelong habits of judging ourselves favorably or unfavorably based on factors out of step with love's vision. By God's grace, we have the power to stop judging ourselves and others by pride and shame and stop assigning guilt and blame – to ourselves or others. Let's see what happens when we give everyone a break from these ego-habits. Let's experiment with letting go of judgmental attitudes and practices to discover how much more satisfied we feel and how much more energy we have left over to invest in activities more creative than comparison, criticism, favoritism and fault-finding. The ABCs of love lead us into new territory mostly because we'll see our own lives in a new light and find that even familiar territory looks more interesting and promising while unfamiliar territory looks inviting instead of threatening. As you master the ABCs of love, your fears will fade into the background instead of loom in your face as obstacles. You'll experience delight in moving beyond fears to explore an adventure in sharing life – on divine unconditional love's terms.

The ABCs of love are not just about you. By mastering them you benefit everyone. You reap the direct benefits of your mastery. Others reap the indirect or side benefits of your mastery. Mastering love's ABCs will reveal your natural power to release more peace, hope and joy within yourself and your family, neighborhood, city, nation and world. By using the ABCs of love you will promote social justice, reduce violence and suffering and lift yourself and others to share in more compassionate, constructive

lifestyles. *It is who you are and how you honor, celebrate and share the person you are that matter most.* Every one of us is inherently valuable no matter how poorly or well we may have learned to meet other people's expectations and win social approval. To implement MLK Jr.'s dream of a more just society, use this booklet to rediscover and reveal your true nature as God's love child and live with courage to express all your freedom. You hold in your hands a passport to a new way of living that you can share with everyone. Use this passport to travel not around the world but in a loop inward to your inner self and then back outward into your relationships. Let's call this feedback loop a "love-nurturing loop." We grow by using our passport to explore this loop to fulfill Jesus' command that we love one another as he loves us.

This booklet guides you to appreciate and nurture within yourself the authenticity and integrity of "inner self" (what MLK Jr. called "content of character") that is your true nature. The ego you've developed during your life so far is a fake, incomplete misrepresentation of you. It is not your true identity. As the ego tried to protect you from judgment by other people's egos, it assigned to hidden corners of your memory vital qualities of your true nature that you need to invest wisely and boldly in an expanding experience of love. You can no longer hide (or try to forget about) such ego-shunned qualities of yourself as if you can think of selected features of yourself as unlovable and still welcome the love you yearn to share. Each of us in our own way must learn to step out of the closets of our egos to reveal the lovable, resilient, sensitive, empathetic, empowered, authentic, whole person every one of us truly is. The ego says, "Run and hide. Let no one see the real you and tag you out." Tagging or labeling is its game. Some qualities it labels "good" and teaches us to feel proud of and other qualities it labels "bad" and teaches us to feel ashamed of. By pride and shame, the ego enslaves us within its false way of survival. The ABCs of love show that the ego's game is self-defeating. It no longer needs to haunt any of us. There are no outcasts, exiles, losers or scapegoats in love's all-welcoming reality of life.

This booklet's ideas are helpful in my life. I trust that you will also discover their helpfulness. Trust matters most. To master the ABCs of love, we commit ourselves to a journey together as trusted companions who share a common vision for serving everyone's best interests – without exception – so that we, too, may enjoy the fruits of our investment in our noble adventure. This booklet is most helpful if it is studied in a group setting so that students can practice the principles of healthy relationships. We can reasonably expect of our practice initial awkwardness to eventual excellence, not perfection. Within the ABCs of love is abundant room for errors and corrections of errors. We grow together from both our failures and our successes. On the road to excellence as love-sharers, we'll be safe to admit mistakes and humbly make corrections readily. That's how we activate grace as the antidote for guilt and shame.

The "G" in love's alphabet covers a multitude of wins including grace and gentleness as well as generosity and gratitude. Relax and be a master. You'll discover that you are more of a natural in the field of love than you may now imagine. The Sufi mystic Rumi recorded his discovery of love's field when he wrote the verses quoted below. He gained his insights into love by sharing his heart with a person who was a stranger to his social traditions. Within this friendship, Rumi discovered that his

upbringing within his community's traditions was shaped by his craving for social approval and neglected his heart's desires. Like others who use family upbringing and formal education to safeguard success and status, Rumi later discovered that he had become "too learned to be wise." The ABCs of love reveal wisdom. They encourage you to wise up to live, love, laugh and liberate your true self as fully as your heart desires.

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field.  
I'll meet you there.  
When the soul lies down in that grass,  
the world is too full to talk about.  
Ideas, language, even the phrase  
'each other' no longer make sense."  
Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī

There is power in wisdom and its holistic approach to life. Wisdom in self-understanding is too often neglected in modern society. We avoid wisdom and escape into foolishness when we mindlessly pursue our more superficial goals and devote our minds to comparing, critiquing, judging and finding fault with ourselves and others according to competitive social standards that lack meaning in Eternity. In our escapist lifestyles, we escape from love and feel lost and unable to find our way back. By conforming to social patterns of thinking and acting that reflect our fears, we elude wisdom and hide from love.

The ABCs of love invite us to stop, look and listen to wisdom's call within our hearts. Listen closely within the core of your being where wisdom whispers, "Try the ABCs of love. They threaten only your ego's rules of pride and shame." By stepping free of ego's enslaving rules, roles and rituals you'll likely discover relief and gratitude for being truer to yourself than you've yet dared to be.

This is the vision to which Jesus called his disciples long ago – and still calls us today. It is the life of divinely empowered authenticity and service he modeled for us to follow in. It is the vision that captured Martin Luther King Jr.'s heart and mind and can now capture yours. It extends beyond non-violence to discover within us the same God-sourced power that Jesus embodied to heal the harm that violence causes. Many of Jesus' followers shy away from claiming and exercising that healing power and instead lead lives that conform to prevailing, safe social patterns rather than dare to be socially nonconformist by devoting our lives to God's divine ideals and ideas. Jesus was not a social conformist. He calls us to be as radically nonconformist as he was. He was a practicing idealist, totally practical in how he related to others as an embodiment of God's love and divine nature.

By practicing the principles of love as revealed through the ABCs of love, we nurture our ever-expanding capacity to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8) wherever and whenever our hearts lead us. Our capacity to share God's presence heart to heart with others extends everywhere always. Wherever we are from moment to moment God's presence within empowers us to respond to those who feel powerless and still hunger, as we have, to know that God's power is also theirs to share. In this most excellent way, impulses of love radiate ever wider as we serve alongside Jesus to do our part to be the light that sets us all free from ego's mind-blinding, heart-numbing darkness. Freedom beyond ego = walking humbly with God. Dr. King's vision echoes Jesus' vision for a world in which love's light shines in the darkness of our fears to show us how to rise beyond ego. We are the light MLK Jr. had in mind when he said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness – only light can do that."

Practicing the ABCs of love guides us to discover the light of unconditional, divine love within us and awakens our courage to let it shine through us boldly. Because the light within us is God's presence, it will turn out not to be merely this "little light of mine." This expanding "grand light of ours" renews the world in which we live and energizes our every thought and action. Walking in oneness together in freedom from ego as authentic children of God empowers us all as we demonstrate God commitment to share divine power generously with everyone, leaving no one out of Jesus' welcome. It is not God's will that anyone would be excluded from divine grace. In practicing the ABCs of love, you are choosing to release throughout all of your relationships – known and not-yet-known – the empowering inner presence of God we all can learn to welcome and share. God is present within each of us even before we are aware of the Presence. Let's support each other in expressing our courage to live that truth in all relationships.

### **What's in It for Me, You, Us, Them and All Creation?**

You may be asking, "Why should I bother studying this booklet?" or "What good will it do to share my study of it?" I want to provide a brief response to these realistic questions. It's true that this booklet promotes community service as a worthwhile activity. But this booklet is not just for people inclined to be helpful, engage in community service or be "civic minded." It's for everyone's benefit. Perhaps, like me, you're not especially eager to participate in political rallies or give public speeches. Perhaps you developed the habit of keeping quiet and not sharing your opinions readily because you feel safer that way. Or perhaps you are inclined to be more outspoken and give voice to your ideas without caring much about what others may think or approve of. You have your own reasons for the way you currently interact with others – and for how and when you choose to lift up or lower your voice.

Applying the ABCs of love helps you to find your authentic voice and be more confident, capable and balanced in your approach to life. Our ego's fears may cause us to hesitate and be overly cautious or to rush ahead of wisdom's guidance. Yet our ego-learned attitudes and habits need not dictate our actions. In practicing the ABCs of love, we can discover our capacity to be both supportive of others as well as to speak up as a leader more competently. We no longer feel the need to remain unnoticed in the shadows as if our ideas don't count or to silence others as if our ideas are the only ones that count. Now we can listen proactively to ideas others share too. Plus we no longer sit on the fence when controversy arises as if afraid to tolerate other people's disagreement or disapproval. We can stand up for ourselves and our ideas in the face of disagreement or misunderstanding. We can share our ideas more effectively with people who may not receive them readily – or may even resist them rigidly. When we listen to others attentively we find others who are more willing to listen to us attentively too.

In our society, many learn to listen to a few outspoken voices and remain quiet or share only brief comments. We may talk privately with a few others close by, but mostly we keep our thoughts and feelings to ourselves. In this way, most of us learn to accept our feelings of helplessness as normal and permanent. We learn not only to feel helpless but to act as if we are helpless. We learn to throw up our hands, saying "What can I do about it?" and keep living in shrinking circles of familiar futility. If

everyone around us feels helpless, our circle of companions reinforces our feelings of helplessness, as if there is no alternative. If someone invites us to participate in community service or engage in civic or political action, we are convinced it is a waste of time and decline. When we decline we may feel “bad” but we still don’t become involved because feeling “bad” is also normal for us. We’ve become well-adjusted to feeling guilty, ashamed or both. As those feelings become normal in our lives, we mistake them as part of our identity. We may not like ourselves for accepting those feelings as “who we are” but we don’t see any alternative. In that manner, not liking ourselves may gradually become normal too.

In the face of any reason you may have for not becoming involved in community service or engaging in civic or political activities, I invite you to use the ideas in this booklet to test the waters and see what you discover may be truer about yourself than you yet realize. Your identity may not in fact be trapped in feelings of helplessness, futility, guilt and shame. These may be your current emotions but they may also be changeable emotions that need not define who you are. Having such emotions may simply demonstrate your sensitive nature and show how a fear-based society has trapped you in feelings of powerlessness precisely because of your preference to be gentle, kind and generous. Gentleness, kindness and generosity are strengths of character – traits of your best nature, not weaknesses at all.

In addition to discovering your true character strengths as expressions of power to make a difference in your family and community, you may also find that using the ideas shared here will improve your own experiences with intimacy. Humbly accepting who you are as a gentle, kind and generous person opens doors to more love within personal relationships. That happens naturally as you grow to appreciate yourself more as a person and become increasingly more honest with yourself as you discover more and more reasons to like and even love yourself. When you like and love yourself you are more willing to risk allowing others to know, like and love you too. That’s how love’s cycles of self-discovery work. It’s not just about helping your family, neighborhood and community-at-large enjoy a better quality of life as if it’s always for others and never for your own benefit too.

This booklet is not about how to sacrifice your life for others. It is about how to live your life with personal joy and fulfillment as you are set free to be the empowered person you truly are. With a growing sense of power, you will feel more confident about your personal value and not try to control others by fear nor cower in fear yourself. You’ll reap greater fulfillment in seeing how your presence as an authentic person of integrity helps others feel their own inner power awakening. Your presence inspires others to join together in building a society that honors and celebrates every member and excludes none. The ABCs of love will ripple outward from within all who realize their value and practice sharing love diligently.

“Make my life a sacrament for those who came my way.”  
Unknown author

You do not have to take my word for what I promise here. You can test the waters for yourself and set sail upon them as an experiment in love-empowerment. At first you may need to learn to sail in calm waters within safe harbors before you sail on storm-tossed seas. Yet soon you will sense that you’re getting the hang of new skills and a new orientation to life that permits you to take the risk of being more

helpful in bringing people together and drawing out the best in them. You will see in others the same strengths of character and capacity for collaboration that you learned to see in yourself. You will catch glimpses of authenticity and integrity in people and help them to honor and celebrate themselves as you learn to honor and celebrate yourself. You may even dare to rock the boat of the “way things are” and send ripples of change throughout the waters of life around you to show that “business as usual” is not the only way of doing business. By being true to yourself you will reveal the alternative to mistakenly forgetting our own true nature as caring, sharing, daring human beings who face life together and co-create the better world our hearts desire to enjoy.

### **A Toolkit for Building Character and Revitalizing Relationships**

This booklet’s tools will help you be a competent, self-aware self-nurturer and nurturer of others. You will find these tools in the Toolkit at the back of the booklet. Have them before you while you study and talk about applicable sections. These tools help you develop yourself as a strong person of integrity to participate helpfully within your family and within all larger communities in which you may choose to participate. They are for you to use in examining your own character, setting your own goals for self-improvement and evaluating your progress. But these tools are not for your or anyone else to use to harshly criticize or find fault with you. Nor are they for you to use to criticize or find fault with others. They are for self-examination and self-development. In 12-step programs for recovery from addictions/dependencies, self-examination is called “taking your own inventory” rather than taking someone else’s inventory as if your role is to be critical of others. It is important to examine your own character with compassion for yourself. If you want to ask someone else to help you in this process, that’s wise. It is usually helpful to take into your confidence someone you trust to make sure that you’re not too hard on yourself and yet also don’t skip passed issues you need to face directly. Compassion, patience and balance are helpful.

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”  
Socrates

You may or may not currently feel like you belong within a family or any other group. You may feel mostly on your own alone. Others may feel that they belong to a family and perhaps to other groups too. Yet, merely “belonging” does not necessarily mean the same as “participating helpfully.” How, when and with whom you choose to practice the ideas shared in this booklet is entirely up to you. Within your heart you will find the guidance you need to practice them according to your own life’s circumstances and under changing circumstances that may arise. You do not need to use them a certain way or at a certain time simply because others do. You may choose your own opportunities and your own timing. Although these tools are universally helpful, they allow each individual to chart his or her own path in putting them into practice as he or she chooses to upgrade his or her character and relationship attitudes and skills and to participate in any one-on-one relationships or group relationships. As discussed more completely later, our relationships are the fields in which we practice and master the ABCs of love. We bless each other when we tolerate each other’s fumblings and stumblings as novices of love.

Basic tools in the Toolkit to strengthen your character and develop your relationship capacities include:

- Illustration 1: I-Zone Chart
- Illustration 2: Wholeness Archetype
- Illustration 3: Healthy Emotions Map
- Illustration 4: Core Life Orientations Wheel
- Illustration 5: Energy of Bonding
- Illustration 6: Cycle of Mutual Violation with Transition to Cycle of Mutual Appreciation

These tools work together in an *integrated process infused with synergy*. We'll take up each as a separate tool. However keep in mind that they are most helpful when applied as a holistic system of intra-personal and interpersonal transformation that brings us all into unity or oneness within a community of healthy relationships composed of healthy, whole people. In terms of traditional Bible teachings, these tools implement Paul's admonition, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2 – NIV) This is the process Jesus had in mind when he told Peter, "You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." (Matthew 16:23 – NIV) He taught the same principles when he said, "Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." (Luke 20:25 – NIV)

Today Caesar is our collective ego and the "pattern of the world" is woven of the habits through which our individual egos think, feel and act. We, as children of God, are God's and need to be aware of ourselves as such by seeing God's nature imprinted within our hearts and minds as clearly as Caesar's image was printed on the coins minted to honor him. We need to learn to give ourselves back to God in service to those God calls us each to serve. To do so is to honor God and ourselves too. As we allow the ego's habits to dissolve, love's habits take their place. In a totally integrated, transformative process, the Kit's tools allow us to answer Jesus' prayer in John 17 that his followers would experience oneness with God as he experienced it. He modeled the lifestyle of oneness in which he wants each of us to participate.

Our purpose is not to perpetuate the ego's status quo within which ideas and emotions trigger us automatically to compare ourselves with others and engage in various forms of competition through comparison, self-criticism and criticism of others. Use of these tools to judge, find fault with and make ourselves or others feel extra guilt or shame is tool-abuse. We already feel worrisome and distracting guilt and shame. These tools will predictably cause us to be more aware of emotional burdens that motivate us unconsciously to act or not act. Let's apply these tools to discover how they provide relief from our hidden burdens as we become more aware of them and not add to our burdens. Always keep their purpose in mind. Judgmental attitudes can be shed as the ego is shed. We can engage with each other as whole persons instead of as egos who are hypersensitive to criticism or resort to it by reactionary reflex. We need no longer apply double standards nor engage in hypocritical thinking to avoid accepting the truth that sets us free of ego.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, . . . I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."  
Jesus (Matthew 11:28-29)

By using the Kit's tools, we grow freer to no longer attack or defend ourselves or attack others in endless cycles of pre-emptive and retaliatory defensiveness. As whole persons we accept our unifying universal human qualities as well as our uniquely distinctive, individualized expressions of the universal. We no longer remain trapped within the closed system of the Western, dualistic thinking that assumes that everything must have an opposite and that we must rate everyone as superior or inferior. We move beyond concepts of reward and punishment to embrace mutual appreciation and support in the context of wholehearted grace. We learn to excel as each of us has the natural (but often dormant) potential to excel without feeling in competition with anyone because no one else can possibly be who we each are. You can only be your valued self, not me or another. I can't be you or anyone else, only me. We will all be at peace and more joyfully satisfied when we accept ourselves as who we are. Being free becomes joyful as it shows us the way forward into a multicultural society of courageously humble diversity amid oneness.

### **I-Zone Chart (Refer to Toolkit Illustration 1)**

Let's look at the I-Zones in Illustration 1. We can begin with any zone and move about the zones as we prefer. It is generally helpful to "check in" with each regularly to assess its health status. *That's the measure we're using: health.* We're not measuring our I-Zones by how proud or ashamed we are about any of them. We're not evaluating them to see how "bad" or "good" we may see ourselves to be or to compare ourselves competitively with others. We focus on our improving health as a "work in progress." And we're aware that what is normal in our society may not necessarily be healthy. We live in a society that has become progressively less healthy as addictive pleasures gradually seduce us and we lose track of how their side effects are subtly robbing us of health, happiness and deeper feelings of fulfillment. Using the I-Zones helps us to let go of such attractions and distractions that betray our health.

In modern society, conditions of less than optimal physical, emotional, mental, social, volitional and spiritual health have become normal and treated by symptom-relief rather than healed at their root cause. We can address them at their root cause by diligently applying the I-Zones and other tools of the ABCs of love. We can measure our progress by asking ourselves, "How satisfied am I with each I-Zone quality of my life?" and "How satisfied do I believe Jesus to be with it?" Are you willing to let Jesus show you what it means to be nonjudgmental and compassionately accepting as he helps you to gradually close the gap between your current level of quality in each I-Zone and the ideal of excellence in health and wholeness your heart desires? Even as the process of upgrading our lives may remain largely a mystery to our egos, we can cooperate with it as divine beings "in progress" or "in the process of growth." Jesus asks of us not "obedience" as if to enslave us, but instead "cooperation" with the process that liberates us from the ego's enslavement. The ego tries to make progress look beyond our reach by calling it "perfection" and coloring holiness as rare. But "holiness" is "healthiness." It is God's will that we be healthy as God is healthy and regain and sustain our health with diligence and patience.

To use the I-Zones wisely means to focus on mastering the process of self-nurturing and not fall into the trap of compulsively striving for perfection as if self-nurturing is another performance impelled

by a compulsion to bury guilt and shame as ego buries those emotions. Jesus has no interest in burying or promoting guilt and shame. Forgiveness is his antidote for guilt, acceptance his antidote for shame. As our gentle shepherd, Jesus leads us not as lambs to the slaughter but as lambs to the laughter. When we see our lives in the light of forgiveness, we discover that we are the light because it shines within us as us! This discovery brings such great relief that we laugh along with our co-forgiven companions as we emerge beyond the ego's painfully harmful definition of life into God's healing, healthy lifestyle.

To use the I-Zone self-examination process as it is designed is to demonstrate that God's will for your life is not to be a sacrifice for others but instead a sacrament of love, not the sorrow of the cross but the joy of crossroads where fellow pilgrims meet to share God's Presence and know the miracle of being loved within healthy/holy, grace-filled relationships. It is to discover how to live as consecrated by the Spirit of Love instead of as desecrated by the ego's false values and priorities – its false idols of its world.

### *Inspiration Zone*

At the core of our I-Zones is our capacity to receive inspiration. God establishes the "I" being we are within a zone of inspiration as its native environment – a zone with which we can naturally interact but largely fail to tune into once the ego trains us to ignore it rather than be open to it. Modern ego-based cultures teach us to tune out our inner inspirations in favor of tuning into the world outside us. Our ego causes us to believe that messages assaulting our minds from the external world are extremely important and that messages gently nudging up from within us can safely be disregarded as irrelevant. Not so! Messages rising gently to our awareness from within contain peace, courage, wisdom, creative ideas and other nutrients for our minds that would make our lives flow together to be shared with relative ease and joy. The universal healthcare system espoused here is a system of mutually interactive self-care that values our inner nature and reverses the process to which the ego has taught us to conform.

Reversing the focus of our attention from outward to inward may seem at first awkward but will eventually become increasingly more natural. The ego is unnatural. Wholeness is natural. Conforming to the ego's norms is inhumane to ourselves and others. Learning to be a nonconformist in the ego's world is humane to a radical degree. If we attend to outward signals, we sense the energy of fear that drives them and allow fear to control us. By intention we reverse our attention's focus to listen inward, where we discover inner signals driven by the energy of love that lift us free of ego. In going inward to listen we become intimate with our true nature, with our true "I." In that renewed intimacy with Self, we discover our renewed capacity to enjoy intimacy with others because the energy of love opens doors to intimacy within relationships that became sealed off by the energy of fear. While in the outer world around us fear drives people to debate how to exercise the "right to bear arms," we are inspired to investigate our responsibility and privilege to bare our hearts and open our arms to one another.

There are a variety of ways to investigate the Inspiration I-Zone. Meditation is one way to prepare to conduct this investigation because meditation puts us into a listening mode. Practices of meditation are varied but the essence of all is to silence the "monkey chatter" of our fear-filled minds and

listen in the silence to what we may yet hear if we are patient. Fears stir up the chatter and introduce static in the atmosphere. To listen, we let go of fear. Whatever works for you to still your mind and enter into a listening mode is appropriate. Sometimes I include in my meditation heart-uplifting music (of all genres, not merely sacred music) to help me to set aside my fears, but that's not for everyone.

The goal of meditation is stillness of mind so that the listening stage of contemplation and reflection can come next. In the calm pool of our contemplative minds self-reflection is possible. In the silence beyond the chatter/static what comes gently through to our awareness? Develop your own practice for achieving this experience and investigate your Inspiration I-Zone without assuming anything about what you will encounter except that the inspirations you sense within you will be helpful. Be patient with yourself. The practice of meditation may highlight how impatient we've become by habits we'd not realized we'd formed. Those are ego's habits. Let them go with compassion for the "I" who adopted them when it seemed useful to do so. The beloved "I" who is you no longer needs such habits.

### *Industry Zone*

The Industry I-Zone points our attention outward into our actions and the ideas we carry out through our bodies' performance-oriented activities. There's a pattern in this process of inquiry. First we inquire inward into "inspiration" and then outward into "industry" then again inward and next outward and then into I-Zones where we are challenged to blend inward and outward into one unified state of awareness. Even while inquiring inward to assess the health of our inspiration zone, we may be prompted by messages from outside of us that resonate inside as inspiring. The interplay between inner and outer will become a single integrated experience as we become increasingly familiar with zones of energy that are depicted artificially as separate rings of I-Zones but in reality represent one whole person radiating as a *being of multi-frequency energy* throughout all I-Zones and beyond. Perhaps it is helpful to visualize your "I" as generating ripples of I-Zone expressions throughout the waters of life around you. You are a drop in the ocean of love that merges with the ocean while simultaneously you create rippling vibrations, even boat-rocking waves if you so choose! The paradox of being individually yourself as an expression of humanity's diversity while living, loving and laughing in unity with the whole human race comes into your awareness as life's reality. Such is love's reality that we have the inherent power and privilege to co-create together instead of conforming to ego's status quo of separation and loneliness.

In our past, we may have interpreted being "industrious" as being actively engaged in making an effort to produce products or services to earn rewards of praise, financial security, etc. As participants in the ego's educational and economic institutions, we learned to conform to the expectations of those who dispensed rewards we valued. The groups we belonged to shaped our lives more than we may have realized. Now we are devoting our industrious energies previously invested in education, work, leisure time, etc. into the pursuit of excellence as members of a new society that reflects alternative values, priorities and commitments. In identifying with those alternatives, we encounter an inner resonance that may amaze us. Rising free of the ego's rat-race maze as a false version of life is amazingly healthy. Now

is the time to become fully conscious of how we can make choices independent of the social approval of egos to engage in co-creating a sustainable, satisfying, non-ego society for all in harmony with Nature. The ideas and activities we carry out through our bodies do matter. Actions do speak louder than words!

### *Insight Zone*

Looking once again inward, we investigate the Insight I-Zone as the state of mind we experience as we dare to honor our own intuition and its inner revelations. It is a state of growing open-mindedness in contrast to the shrinking closed- or narrow-mindedness into which the ego seeks to seduce and reduce us. The pattern of the ego-mind's worldview is to set boundaries and to defend its shrinking boundaries as proof of being right, even if others have to be "wrong" when we are "right." The tendency to use our mind to classify, compare, analyze, debate and defend positions under the ego's dominion of the left brain is strongly reinforced by social approval and other rewards for being "good" at this use of our mind. Good grades, good pay, good access to pleasures, etc. "prove" how "good" it is to conform to the ego's rules, roles and rituals in the use of our minds. Such conformity means to live as puppets dancing to the expectations by which other egos string us along. We lose our capacity to think for ourselves and instead value our ability to engage in "group think." We forget our true selves as we adopt ego-training.

Use of the I-Zones violates this training. It points us inward to inner ideas or "insights" of which our minds can become aware as if ideas we find within ourselves might have more value than ideas promoted so heavily around us. Creative ideas await our discovery on the path inward in exploring our insights. We need not fear becoming isolated and alone in honoring our insights if we share this process with others and realize that others are discovering compatible, parallel and/or dovetailing insights within themselves. In rediscovering within us the "stranger" we allowed our true nature to become we are in good company. We are in the company of all who explore our own inner revelations about who we are, why we are here and what we have to contribute to co-creating our shared awakening to divine love.

### *Individuality Zone*

For many of us, the challenge of emerging beyond our false identity of ego includes the fear that we'll not exist as an individual if we don't relentlessly set and defend our "boundaries" as an independent person. What is left of us to distinguish us from the masses if we don't defend ourselves as egos? Investigating the Individuality I-Zone addresses that concern. We address it more fully when we take up the topic of Authenticity and human wholeness later in this booklet. The resolution of this concern is important because otherwise the ego is crafty about maintaining itself as our long-practiced, but false identity. If ego is a false concept of who we are, what's the real deal?

The real deal is that we are each a unique card in humanity's diverse multi-suited deck. We belong to various classifications just as playing cards belong to suits, but we're also a unique card in each classification. Within each "suit" of humanity's deck, there are cards similar to the cards in other suits. Yet even then, no one is totally defined by the "type" of card he or she may be. There is an individual uniqueness even beyond suits and card types. None of us is a stereotype. It may be helpful to look at

humanity through this metaphor in various ways. The “suits” may be based on race while the cards are based on other factors like age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, stage of development, etc. Or the suits may be based on age, gender, ethnicity or religion while the cards reflect other factors.

Using this metaphor, one can play with how suits are defined and cards dealt to create various hands available to play. The ego need not define who we are and what suits may include us or what hands we are dealt or seek to join. In the process of transforming society to be less defined and dominated by ego, we need all of us to be authentic individuals as we shuffle the diversity of humanity and create a variety of formats for inclusivity. Perhaps its helpful to see the chaotic change taking place in the world today as a form of reshuffling that may result in cards previously assigned to lower power moving up to share greater power. A humble ace may transform from a lowest value card to overshadow glamorous face cards. This transformation will be governed by fearless love, not by loveless fear.

### *Intimacy Zone*

Intimacy is another outward inquiry to the extent that it refers to intimacy within relationships with others. To the extent that it refers to intimacy with Self, it focuses inward. The Intimacy I-Zone is an example of a zone in which our inquiry or investigation is no longer either inward or outward but is now both inward and outward to be fully helpful. The both/and orientation itself violates the ego’s rules of separating our ideas into opposing categories and promoting irreconcilable conflict among the categories in order to prove the necessity of the ego’s role. What if the resolution of a seeming conflict between supposedly opposing positions turns out to be “both/and” or a third alternative yet to be discovered that honors all positions? What if the positions hotly debated among socially aggressive egos are not the only positions worthy of consideration? What if becoming intimately acquainted with our true nature reveals the desirability of other options not as well practiced as ego-options? What if we feel at first awkward standing on newly discovered legs within the Intimacy I-zone and yet sense our desire to gain our balance there and learn to walk, run and frolic with total trust in our uttermost well-being?

Although often used in a limited way to refer to physical closeness (especially sexual contact), as used here, the term “intimacy” embraces more. It includes sharing heart to heart those aspects of ourselves we’d previously kept hidden when we formerly conformed to the ego’s paradigm of pride and shame. We fool ourselves if we think we can experience physical intimacy while still avoiding emotional intimacy. When we decide to share the energy of our bodies to any degree, we also share the energy of our hearts. In fact, all sharing is holistic. The main difference is whether we are conscious of the energies we share or remain unconscious of them. Among our hidden aspects are our tender emotions. Without sharing our emotions, love cannot be shared. The ego teaches us to deny and bury our emotions, frustrating all attempts to enter into intimate relationships where love can be set free to flow naturally. Ego walls divide us – within us and between us. We must dismantle the ego’s walls to be free of the consequences of believing ourselves to be egos and living as if we are so limited. We will gain helpful insights into our emotions when we explore the Healthy Emotions Map (Illustration 3) and how to use it.

Investigating intimacy also reveals that modern society overvalues independence and undervalues interdependence. Independence is a natural developmental stage for humans to pass through. Often we fail to pass through, instead becoming stuck because we mistakenly believe it to be the final achievement towards which we strive. The ABCs of love unmask this limited, growth-arresting perspective and explore the more promising developmental phase of interdependence beyond independence.

### *Integrity Zone*

Although poised on the outer rim of the I-Zone target toward which we aim in our quest for freedom from the harsh side-effects of ego's reign, integrity is all-pervasive. We must cultivate both Authenticity and Integrity. In time they will fuse into qualities of our mature character. We may look at "authenticity" as our boldly emerging true nature and "integrity" as the process of exploring, revealing, sharing, honoring and celebrating our true nature. Our goal is fully expressed authenticity. Integrity is our means of achieving this goal. Means and ends must ultimately become the same for our self-nurturing to be a sustainable process that achieves worthwhile outcomes at various milestones.

What term might we use for lack of integrity so that we can refer to lack of integrity conveniently? The term "hypocrisy" comes to mind. At its core, "hypocrisy" means "hypo" (too little or under) plus "crisy" (deciding). Thus hypocrisy means "engaging too little in the process of decision making." It includes the idea that snap decisions and knee-jerk judgments are impressive and that time-consuming reflective thinking is old-fashioned, boring and not worth our bother. It need not be a term loaded with guilt or shame. It has, however, become one. So, it may seem harsh to use it here. Yet I use it because I seek to unload its emotional negativity and allow us to employ it helpfully. This booklet aids those who do not want to engage in hypocrisy and prefer to engage in integrity. It benefits those who prefer to "be true to ourselves so as to be false to no one," to paraphrase Shakespeare.

The ego teaches us to be comfortable with pretending (hypocrisy) as a way of getting along in the shallow end of life's pool and avoiding experiences of sustainable, deeply rooted love organic to our true nature. Pretenses abound in ego-toxified comfort zones while love's enduring and endearing qualities are scarce. That's why engaging in integrity will feel uncomfortable at first. It's outside our comfort zone or familiar territory to use the I-Zones to probe into deeper truths of our lives and of how we relate to one another. The ego convinces us to ignore our hearts, be selective about what we allow ourselves to feel and pretend that fear does not control us. Afraid of the unknown, we may fear looking within ourselves for the forgotten, unknown aspects of ourselves that the ego taught us to bury and pretend do not exist.

Choosing to engage in integrity to recover our authentic nature and enjoy life more fully means to adopt a transformative orientation to life. It is a decision not to be glossed over lightly with hypo[too little]attention to what we're doing. One purpose of this booklet is to provide enough information to permit you to make an informed decision and give informed consent to the emergence of your true self in place of the ego's false concept of self that you may have been pretending (often unwittingly) to be but with which you are not satisfied. It's a choice to aim for authenticity and integrity as if those character

traits matter highly. It's a choice I encourage you to make because as you find the courage within yourself to do so, you'll both like and love yourself more than you may not as yet realize you otherwise fail to do.

Among other reasons for encouraging you to engage in the I-Zone process of inquiry is that we need to have people in positions of power within our families and social institutions at all levels who intentionally develop – and throughout their lives diligently sustain – characters of wholehearted authenticity and integrity. Why? Because we've learned but failed to fully apply John Acton's insight stated in the box to the side. Need the tendency Acton observed always control? Or is it merely the tendency of the ego to cause it to be so? Acton left open the possibility that "almost always" does not mean "on every occasion without exception." Together we can create conditions within which what were previously rare exceptions of healthy, sound character become more common among all men, women and children. Upgrading the quality of parenting and leadership throughout our communities blesses future generations.

"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority . . ."  
John Acton

We can intentionally nurture men and women of sound character who band together to exercise power, even great power, with responsibility as people of wholehearted authenticity and incorruptible integrity when they purposely support each other as stewards of power in service to their families and communities – and all individual members within them. Men and women of sound (healthy) characters need not succumb to corrupting influences common to those who pride themselves for having come to occupy positions of power and forget why others have entrusted them with power. Being a steward of love's power is a sacred trust to be exercised with honor towards every person because every person matters to God. To become aware of God's empowering presence and vision within us – as the use of the Toolkit encourages – is to become empowered with humility and not succumb to arrogance on account of ignorance of how we come to be invested with power and entrusted to use it wisely. It means being truly powerful on love's terms, not merely pretending to be powerful on ego's terms. And it requires developing the character traits Martin Luther King Jr. had in mind when he expressed the hope that his children and all of us might someday be judged according to content of character rather than according to the color of our skin or any other trait less significant and meaningful than the traits of our character.

Society needs men and women of sound character to rise to leadership as they exercise the power entrusted to them with humility as stewards of this social resource. As we transform society into one in which humble exercise of power becomes the new normal, great spirits will encounter opposition from those who identify as egos and defend the status quo. Einstein's observation bears consideration as we rally around such newly emerging leaders and show our support and appreciation for their courage in stepping forth amid social turmoil to lead us with exceptional minds and compassionate hearts.

"Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. The mediocre mind is incapable of understanding the man who refuses to bow blindly to conventional prejudices and chooses instead to express his opinions courageously and honestly."  
Albert Einstein

## **A is for Authenticity – Wholeness as Who We Are (Refer to Toolkit Illustration 2)**

By using the I-Zones we explore, evaluate and care with integrity for our full nature as gifted, authentic human beings. Another term for fully developed and expressed authenticity is “wholeness.” The I-Zone inquiry process allows us to be a “work in progress,” always becoming freer to express our natural wholeness. It is a holistic process by which we cultivate wholeness without needing to protect it within an ego as a chick within its shell. The ego formed because we were experiencing an ego-based social environment. Ego is a survival reaction to protect against intrusion by other egos around us. Because interacting with other egos as an ego saps our power, freedom from ego is naturally empowering.

We are not here to allow other egos to parasitically drain us to promote the egoistic goals of the fewer and fewer who ascend to the top of pyramids of power, social status and wealth. Built as “food chains” by and for energy predators, such pyramid schemes entomb both slaves and pharaohs. Those in charge of ego-based cultures want us to believe we must fill only roles subordinate to their egos. Jesus does not agree. To serve in ego’s demeaning roles is to deny our hearts and our true nature as empathetic and compassionate beings here on Earth to serve together and share equitably in the overflow of our service. The ego’s shell keeps us from emerging to develop feathers, exercise our wings and learn to soar together. The ego’s false identity confines us to immaturity in the stage of independence – short on capacity to care for one another. Beyond independence we learn that the love’s sky is limitless.

Illustration 2 is the Wholeness Archetype (WA). It shows our wholeness as a flower open to the light of truth and love that provides continuous energy from within and beyond us. Truth and love are like our unified twin suns. We thrive when we are receptive to their energy. While shadowed by our ego we struggle merely to survive, with varying degrees of success. Mere survival is not deeply satisfying. Our inner “I-being” of wholeness yearns for more. In a culture of whole persons committed to sharing truth and love, we can create opportunities for every member to discover, explore and excel along his or her path of fulfillment. That’s the purpose of a transformational culture and the purpose of every member who shares it. The purpose of the group and of the group’s individual members is the same. Where the ego spots excuses to foster conflict among individuals so as to corrupt the equitable distribution of power, wholeness sees no need for conflict. When differences in viewpoints arise within the group, as naturally they will, the group’s steadfast assumption is that the group will find a way to reconcile those differences by communicating openly about the issues, listening intentionally within their hearts and bringing forth revelations from within. In transition from a fear-based culture to a love-based one, initial extraordinary challenges gradually fade once the new culture demonstrates the viability of its vision and provisions.

Seeds of wholeness start out as dormant within us. Unlike ego’s artificiality that must be learned through painful lessons, wholeness is natural to us. Survival as egos distorts our natural development. We need only establish a social environment rich in unconditional love to encourage us to put down roots, extend leaves upward and blossom when it’s our time to bear fruit. Many factors will influence the timing of each person’s development. To allow time, space and resources for us to recover from our ego-

battered existence and emerge beyond our ego-orientation, we must honor the “developmental diversity” present among us. It’s time to add stages of recovery (a/k/a, stages of grief) and personal development to our categories of diversity. We must cease to judge one another as more or less capable, desirable and worth of love on account of such diversity. From our years of hiding in the ego’s confinement, we each have ideas to offer for consideration in our dialogue about how we may all enjoy sharing the light of truth and love generously with liberty from ego and justice and prosperity beyond ego for all.

### *Fields of Human Wholeness*

As with the I-Zones, it’s important to keep in mind that it is artificial to divide wholeness into six petals. Our wholeness flower is more than the sum of our petals. I call the six facets “fields” because that term depicts their energy-flowing nature better than “petals.” Although we may examine each field as our temporary primary focus, we must not forget that the six subfields always interact dynamically within wholeness’ all-inclusive uni-field. To move our thinking beyond the ego’s habit of separation into a habit of interrelatedness, we need to explore the fields of our wholeness while recalling their interrelatedness. Because ego prefers to view life from a static “snapshot” perspective, it resists seeing within a more dynamic motion picture. Since wholeness is a multifaceted concept flowing with synergy, it’s helpful to learn to be flexible and see wholeness from various points of view. Picturing wholeness as an unfolding multi-petal flower helps to keep in mind its organic, unified, dynamic nature and purpose.

Relationships among fields of wholeness are varied. The Wholeness Archetype (WA) depicts one set of relationships by the arrows pointing in opposite directions to designate three fields on the left-hand side and three fields on the right-hand side. On the left (Spirit, Will and Mind) are expressions of our “inner experiences.” From a Christian perspective, they correspond with the Holy Spirit, Will of God and Mind of Christ. (That is why Jesus said the kingdom of God is within us.) The three fields pointed out to the right (Body, Relations and Emotions) represent expressions of our “outer experiences.” I include brief descriptions of each field to prompt you to think about your own broader, more in-depth ideas about them and engage in dialogues with others about various ideas. Please do not let my ideas be definitive “dialogue-stoppers.” I intend them to be starting points for your further exploration, not final conclusions. It is promising that you may have different ways to see or say things or to disagree with me. I am not an ultimate authority on wholeness. I share only what has come to my mind as helpful to introduce topics. It is up to you to dare to share with others more about what comes to your mind and heart to increase our collective clarity on account of the interactive multiplicity of lights we shine.

For your further discussion, let me point out several other ways that we may think about wholeness:

- A) Fields can be paired interactively across the core from which they radiate. For example, Spirit and Body make up a pairing in which the Spirit cares for the health of the body while the body expresses the Spirit within the physical world of forms. Will and Relations is another pairing, with the potential for the Will of Love instead of ego’s fears to be expressed throughout all Relations in the outer world. The third pairing is Mind and Emotions. This pairing clarified for me that my mind’s health depends

upon my learning to express/share my emotions in caring ways in the outer world within my Relations. When I deny (reject, fail to accept) my emotions and habitually hide them within my mind as unshared, I adopt and maintain the ego's habits of rejecting feelings, wisdom and love too.

B) The energy of life and love flows dynamically throughout the fields, as if each field is a color within the full spectrum of light that is life and love. One direction of this flow starts at Spirit and runs through Will and Mind to be expressed through Body within Relations resulting in Emotions that Spirit can evaluate if we remain (or resume being) sensitive emotionally. This counterclockwise flow represents Eternity's power to turn back time to resolve issues even from our past. The ego teaches us instead to trap energy between Mind and Body without freedom of Will to release energies of grief from our past. Under ego's love-resistant orientation, Will, Spirit, Emotions and Relations gradually shrivel as ego dominates how we more restrictively sense others and think, feel, speak and act.

C) All fields of wholeness have potential to pulsate radiantly from our core to reach out to and embrace more of life. As Body grows, Relations may grow correspondingly or stop expanding or even shrink as we withdraw in fear from social contacts. Our Mind may remain open or become closed. Our Will may succumb to ego's tyrannical rule or discover more expansive power to serve and care for others throughout our expanding Relations. Our Spirit may stretch into the Unknown of our Inner Universe to encounter there more of the Spirit of Love or remain timid and confined by ego to a known comfort zone that stifles our creativity and joy and sets limits on where and how we can even imagine allowing our Body and Mind to explore. Withdrawal in fear or expansion in love is our choice.

### *Dynamics of Growth in the Fields of Wholeness*

The fields of human wholeness are present at the outset of our lives as “potentials” or “seeds in fields to cultivate.” Although they develop simultaneously, these fields also develop in stages with an emphasis on each field sequentially. In the timeline of our life in the physical world, the developmental sequence starts with Body and moves through Emotions, Mind, Relations, Will and Spirit. While any one field is receiving emphasis, all other stages grow too. Wisdom calls us to cultivate all fields continuously.

The designed sequence of emphasis on development of our wholeness is:

- Conception through 1<sup>st</sup> year after birth: Major emphasis on Body Field development
- 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years after birth: Major emphasis on Emotions Field development
- 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> years after birth: Major emphasis on Mind Field development
- 8<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> year after birth: Major emphasis on Relations Field development
- 14<sup>th</sup> through 21<sup>st</sup> year after birth: Major emphasis on Will Field development
- 22<sup>nd</sup> through 31<sup>st</sup> year after birth: Major emphasis on Spirit Field development.

Years 32 and beyond challenge us to integrate all past development into a unified field of wholeness of *resilient personal authenticity and integrity* without implying that both (MLK Jr.'s “content of character”) have not been present and important to cultivate in all earlier stages too.

### *Body Field (Physical Potential)*

While in the womb through the first year beyond birth, our primary task is developing Body. Our body's presence in the womb and after birth calls for people to acknowledge we exist and care for us. Helpless to care for ourselves, we depend on others to survive and thrive. How well others respond to our need for holistic care during this phase leaves impressions on our other fields of potential even before we later emphasize cultivation of these fields as developmental tasks.

The physical field includes more than our body. It embraces all aspects of the physical world in which our body exists. It includes all forms in the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms. Although humanity's physical form has attributes of these kingdoms, we are a creative leap beyond all of them into our own realm because our purpose exceeds the purpose of the included kingdoms. Some call mineral, plant and animal "lesser" kingdoms because they are earlier stages life on Planet Earth. But they are not "lesser" in value or less deserving of appreciation for their true nature. All life has purpose in creating conditions within which humanity can develop in physical form and grow to function according to our created purpose as God's children – embodying God's nature and serving as stewards of all kingdoms.

The physical field also includes manufactured items ("things"). We have relationships with things too. We associate values with things. How we value them determines how we relate to them. We can understand much about our values and priorities based on how we treat manufactured things and living entities. If we treat living entities as things or value things over living entities, we reveal our confusion about how to distinguish what is authentic from what is artificial or illusory. It is harmful to over-emphasize the physical field as if there are no fields of life more important than the physical. Overvaluing physicality (e.g., objectification, materialism, consumerism, hedonism, etc.) distorts our perspective on life and confuses our use of the WA as a tool for nurturing our wholeness.

In societies mesmerized by industrial-technological advancements and physical images and pleasures, we may be lured away from wholeness into a more limited grasp of who we are. Materialism's seductive qualities have eroded humans' awareness of wholeness for many centuries. Materialism, hedonism and other "isms" poison our minds like any progressive disease, sneaking in gradually to limit our awareness that "something has gone missing." It is our capacity for Authenticity that goes missing. When we stray into non-awareness of authenticity, we come to identify with the ego as a false substitute and forget that anything is missing. Forgetting our True Nature and neglecting our wholeness, we fail to nurture ourselves well, allow our physical health to decline far more rapidly than it otherwise would decline and exploit all aspects of the physical world, including each other, as if opportunistic exploitation is a way of life instead of a way of death. To recover and maintain our wholeness requires that we investigate how we came to lose track of it. This leads us into the next two fields of Emotions and Mind.

### *Emotions Field (Emotional Potential)*

The emotions field is another "outer" experience we can enjoy as whole persons. Ego's essential (dys)function is to deny our emotions their full, healthy role in our lives. The ego teaches us to stifle our

emotions, withhold their expression as “too risky” and eventually to render our minds unaware of them. For many who learned to survive as egos while denying our emotions their healthy role we now encounter emotions as mysteries. We became so unacquainted with emotions that they seem like strangers who take us by surprise and must be feared instead of welcomed, honored, celebrated and shared in caring ways. To learn once again to live as whole persons, we must reverse the ego’s heart-numbing process and no longer maintain it. Because recovering awareness and use emotions is vital to sustaining our transformation, we’ll explore it as its own topic with the aid of the Healthy Emotions Map (Illustration 3).

The WA teaches that emotions are healthy when we express them with our mind’s conscious help instead of repress them within our mind’s unconscious memory. Under the ego’s authority, having acquired the habit of not expressing or even being aware of our emotions, we feel awkward in the presence of emotions, ours or those of others. We must relearn to not fear emotions as ego fears them. In unlearning the ego’s way of mishandling emotions, we discover the healthy role of emotions and recover our heart’s capacity to reveal divine inner wisdom as well. Wisdom does not reside merely in the published words of others. It abides within each of us and counsels our minds through our hearts.

As the WA illustrates, Emotions interface between our Relationships in our outer experience and our Spirit in our inner experience. When our emotions function in health ways, they allow us to remain sensitive to and aware of what is happening within our relationships, an aptitude called “empathy.” Our spirit is receptive to what our emotions register happens in the relational world around us. Within one-on-one and group relations, we can tune our hearts to be sensitive or empathetic to emotional energy present in others, even the emotions that others may hide behind ego’s walls. Our intuitive sense of emotions can register what others hide. Without being aware of our capacity to do so, we may even absorb emotional energy from others around us and rise or fall with their emotional states. For example, when the world celebrates, we may feel like celebrating too. When the world hurts, we may hurt along with it, all the while not realizing why we hurt so intensely as the emotions running strong around us interact with our own emotional state. We can feed into the emotions of others unintentionally as we allow such openness.

To experience emotions as healthy, we must be vigilant to ensure that our own emotions are not coloring our heart’s sense of emotional dynamics within others. It is easy to assume that everyone feels the same way that we feel. It’s also easy to assume that the emotions we feel are only our own, as if the emotions of others have not bled over into our Emotion Field. The ego sometimes teaches us to avoid hurting other people’s feelings while our true motivation may be to avoid putting ourselves at risk as if emotional vulnerability is “bad” or “foolish.” At other times, the ego teaches us to manipulate other people’s emotions to get our own way, at whatever cost to our authenticity and integrity, as if being in control of others is always wisest to protect ourselves. At bottom line, fear always distorts the ego’s processing of emotions. We’ve learned by ego-oriented experiences to allow fear to dominate our choices.

To live sustainably as whole persons, we must unlearn the ego’s way of processing our emotions and rise free of fear’s control of our choices. We can achieve freedom by seeing ourselves as whole and

living as whole persons. Transformation from ego to wholeness requires that we re-acquaint ourselves with our spiritual nature, explore our free will's healthy function and no longer allow our mind's capacity to reason to be corrupted by repressed fears and other emotions. Our ego taught us to be self-protective and gradually less aware of our true nature and that of others. The ego taught us to favor those we value most and treat strangers as if strange ways always threaten us. The key to rising free is practicing to trust each other – even with those aspects of ourselves ego taught us to hide in shame or feel guilty about. As Claudia Black counsels in her book It Will Never Happen to Me, we must relearn to “trust, feel and talk about what matters most” to discover that we all share similar inner issues and struggles and would all be best served by bringing them out in the open. Such a renewing practice feels like we are “airing dirty laundry in public” but, in truth, we are cleaning house as Jesus asks us to come clean.

### *Mind Field (Mental Potential)*

In its healthy role in our life, our mind field is sown with ideas endlessly cultivated to benefit ourselves and others. It is like an orchard filled with a variety of fruitful trees. Under the ego's teachings, our mind field can instead become a mine field – laced with hidden trip wires, booby-traps and frightening surprises that stifle our natural curiosity. These hidden pitfalls are loaded with emotions we've squirreled away according to our ego's nut-stashing patterns. Sometimes hidden emotions rot to form marshy ground into which we may sink into depression. Other times they form pockets of anger that may explode with raging shame or guilt if triggered – even if innocently or unintentionally triggered by an unsuspecting passerby. A family member, friend, neighbor or stranger may trip a trigger.

Under the influence of buried emotions, the ego teaches us to distrust our own mind and go along with ego's “group think” rather than think for ourselves. The ego teaches us to fragment our minds into different compartments, so scattering fragments that we may become scatterbrained at times. We may fail to connect the dots of pieces of information to help us make sense of life. Straining to make sense, we may overuse our brain's left hemisphere to over-analyze experiences and data-inputs by sorting, classifying and assigning relative value to each according to ego's values and assumptions we've taken to heart throughout our social training under ego-biased authorities. Very early in life, we learn to use our minds to worry this way and continue throughout life until we identify and let go of this habit. Until we let go of the goal of figuring everything out on our own, we can become lost in endlessly looping ideas. The ego counsels us to be too proud to admit that we are lost and to hide silently in shame rather than to admit it. If we remain hidden, we fail to activate our right hemisphere that is more competent at receiving and processing information provided to our minds through our hearts. Straining our minds within ego's limitations can literally drive us insane (loopy) when we feel trapped thinking and doing the “same thing over and over while expecting a different result.” Insanity plagues us until we move beyond the ego.

Being “lost in thought” is not always unproductive. It can result in insights surfacing to bring us greater understanding. Yet sharing our thoughts and emotions with others generally promotes healthier thinking and advances our recovery from ego's imprisoning ways more rapidly and thoroughly.

Recovery entails grieving through the painful emotions we've buried. To grieve fully, we must unbury them by allowing them to come to mind as memories we can honor fully before laying them to rest. *Grieving is a shared process of emotional/mental health.* The ego may find it awkwardly unfamiliar territory that the ego would prefer not to explore. However, freedom from the ego's unhealthy ways of handling life await us on the other side of grief's transitional process. The onset of grieving usually includes anger as an early stage. The outcome of successfully traversing the territory of grief is acceptance and peace of mind. The journey involves facing pain with courage. We cannot shortchange the process without losing significant benefits. The benefits outweigh the disadvantages of keeping pain buried alive within us. When we bury painful memories, we bury pieces of ourselves and our mind field becomes our own graveyard. In using the Toolkit, we have a new choice to honor ourselves as veterans of life and no longer characterize ourselves as secret losers. Humility beyond the ego helps this happen. Practicing the art of humility results in healthier self-esteem that replaces pride's attempts to mask shame.

For many decades, the United Negro College Fund has declared, "The mind is a terrible thing to waste." That declaration remains as true today as it ever has been. Today we waste one of our valuable natural resources by training our minds to adapt to the ego's way of processing emotions and ideas. The ego does not promote any form of lifestyle. All of the ego's varied ways are deathstyles, no matter how appealing and alluring any may at first appear. The ego sets out a variety of baits to lure us into its dark woods for the novelty and thrill of exploring new experiences with pleasure, pain and power. So long as we process these life encounters through the ego's filters we will eventually become addicted in one or more ways. The ways are as plentiful as there are sources of pleasure and pain and opportunities to wield power. The ego distorts our natural appetites gradually into an ego-dependencies from which it is difficult to recover. The Toolkit offers us a way to establish and sustain our recovery from ego together.

### *Relations Field (Social Potential)*

To recover together requires that we make healthy use of our field of relationships and not waste social opportunities on promoting and perpetuating the ego. Our relationships are opportunities to invest ourselves wisely or foolishly. The ego assumes that life's ultimate goal is to be independent and achieve all valued results "on our own" as if we need no one else in our lives. While surrounded by people who mistake their egos as their identity and strive for success no matter what the cost to their relationships may be, we experience emotional pain (if not also physical pain) of betrayal when we dare to entrust our sensitive, innocent nature to ego's care. So, believing "if we can't beat 'em, we might as well join 'em," we adopt the ego's goals and way of life too. By practicing the ABCs of love together as we study them, we unlearn the ego's habits and develop new ones. In other words, we develop covenant relationships based on sacred trust. We learn to be wise about the promises we make and to keep those we make.

Striving for ego's goal of total independence bars the possibility of sharing life with even one other person in total trust. Yet to enjoy our wholeness we must trust at least one other person 100%.

"Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted."  
Jesus (Matthew 5:4)

What a dilemma! Finding at least one other person to trust 100% helps us to break through logjams of distrust that life may pile up as dams in what otherwise would be a free-flowing river of life along which we navigate on our grand adventure of risk-taking. Healthy relationships involve risk-taking. Lessons masquerading as mistakes will happen. The issue is not how perfectly mistake-free we are but rather how we handle mistakes when we make them and how we handle other people's mistakes when they make them, as inevitably we and they will. (As presented later, the Healthy Emotions Wheel illustrates paths along which we may travel to restore valued relationships when emotionally painful experiences arise.)

In regard to the Relations Field, it is important to emphasize that there is life to enjoy beyond the false "ultimate destination" of independence. Beyond independence awaits interdependence. U.S. history illustrates the nature and value of interdependence. It began with a bold "Declaration of Independence" from Great Britain and any others who sought to continue colonial rule over colonies that yearned for independence. Yet, once the states had declared independence from colonial powers it became apparent that they would have to find a way to work effectively together. They had to engage in interdependence beyond independence. They experimented with Articles of Confederation and then crafted a Constitution to articulate the principles of national interdependence that would preserve the U.S.A. as a viable nation with functioning relationships among the states and a functioning federal level of government too.

As the field across from Will, the Relations Field is the realm in which we work out how best to express own free will while also honoring other people's free wills. The ego assumes that exercising power requires that we dominate other people's wills and always have our own way. Clearly this approach to relationships fails to leave room for other people to feel good about relating to us. Healthy relationships must provide space for everyone's will to be heard, considered and honored as valued and powerful. When participants in a relationship commit to valuing and honoring each other, creative ways to honor both or all participants are discoverable. To discover such creative options requires patience and nonjudgment. The ego makes a competitive game of relationships, rendering them ultimately unhappy and dysfunctional. By practicing authenticity and integrity blended into wholeness, other options besides competition become visible. Cooperation and collaboration are possibilities the ego is reluctant to try, mainly because they require sharing of power that the ego prefers to hoard to itself in its distrust.

### *Will Field (Volitional Potential)*

Will may be the least understood and most often abused field of our human experience. To understand it fully, will must be viewed as free. The freedom we crave reflects our naturally free will. The challenge of humanity is to honor each individual's free will while also honoring the collective welfare of all of us. This booklet is rooted in the idea that our will is freely enjoyed best when we align it with God's will to favor all humanity. It is out of line with God's will and wisdom to exercise our willpower at the expense of anyone's freedom to fully cultivate life, liberty and joy. The ego reflects such misalignment. It distorts our will to mistakenly devote it to ego-preservation instead of to promoting our individual and collective wholeness, authenticity and integrity. Wisdom points out the fallacy of ego's

foolishness. Throughout human history, it has never long worked out that some enjoy freedom while others do not. What works is practicing being responsible for our freedom voluntarily as children of God.

A voluntary relationship of trust in God is what Jesus achieved and leads us into. Some call this “surrender” to God’s will as if surrender is humiliating when it is only humbling. It is indeed humbling to discover that a wise, trustworthy God knows best how life works for all of us. The ego’s arguments are defeated when one admits that the Creator of Life knows how it is best for us to live the gift of life. Trust is key. Since the ego counsels against trusting God and one another, we must unlearn the ego’s lessons in mistrust and substitute God’s lessons to master the art of trusting God and one another again. Students of the ABCs of love will discover that as they trust God and each other to practice together, their faith will prove itself valid. As Jesus told those he healed, “Your faith has made you whole.” (e.g., Mark 5:34)

All life in wholeness originates from Will. Will power shapes our lives as we recall moment by moment to exercise this power in light of our identity as God’s children. Will is the gatekeeper for all other energies and determines whether those energies are devoted to creation or to destruction. Will controls intentions and outcomes – goals and ultimate results. It sets the stage for all forms of tension or conflict and establishes the terms under which such tension or conflict may be expressed, perpetuated or resolved. Will is our capacity to make commitments and to sustain them through all challenges to stray from them. It is not merely decision-making, which is a function of our minds as implementer of our commitments. In cultivating our Will Field, a fundamental question is, “To what do we commit our will as our purpose?” Jesus committed his life to peace and goodwill among all peoples. He not only calls us to follow his commitment but also empowers us to succeed as his faithful followers.

The health of our will may be seen in the degree to which it is accurately aligned with God’s will. The critical focus of inquiry becomes “To what extent does my will match God’s will?” The closer your will comes to match up with Divine Will, the more it comes to align with the will of other humans who are also aligning their will with Divine Will. The WA is based on the idea that there is only one God and only one Divine Will. God is of one mind and will. God’s singleness of mind and will remains unchanged over time because God is unaffected by time. Thus, God has done all God can do to keep our search for Divine Will simple. God is a stable target for all time. All we need do is to develop ourselves as stable instruments for hitting the bull’s-eye of this Divine Target. Challenges arise from the paradox of God’s creation of diversity amid unity within which we are to live in solidarity with the Internal and Eternal Divine Will that loves and accepts all of us regardless of our variety of external manifestations.

The more we see all of us as apples of God’s eye, the more likely we are to succeed in creating our own excellent instrument for discovering the Divine Vision and knowing, heeding and implementing God’s will. Wisdom stabilizes and clarifies our vision. Consultation with others allows us to triangulate on the signals we receive from Spirit in moving forward in our lives. Paradoxically, as we develop our wholeness throughout our lifetime, our commitments may evolve to reflect our growth as God’s children. Sometimes a radical new commitment calls us as if to require us to betray earlier commitments. Yet in

God's eyes the upward call to higher ground is ever before us. Ultimately the stability and clarity of our vision comes from keeping our heart focused on God even when doing so calls us to let go of prior commitments to take up new ones God presents as opportunities to serve the Divine Plan for all of us.

Directly across from the Will field on the WA is the Relations field where we live out God's Divine Plan outwardly. This positioning emphasizes that when Divine Will is done on earth (i.e., within relationships) as it is in heaven's oneness, human experiences on earth manifest the equivalent of heavenly experiences. When two people interact with each other as God desires that they interact, their relationship reflects Divinity and flows with the holy energy of love. In this light, any two people have the potential to interact within a holy relationship. Three people have the potential to do likewise as do any greater number. Eventually all people on earth can learn to attune their wills to God's will and interact with each other on all occasions as if they were in heaven while yet on earth. To the extent that that happens, heaven comes to be on earth as it is in heaven; that is, the kingdom of God comes to be enjoyed in this world although it was not of this world. On such occasions, eternity is experienced in lieu of time and what humans call "miracles" are freed to manifest according to their natural role in life. (The Epilogue shares the Mutual Appreciation Paradigm (M.A.P.) as a model of this type of community.)

To commit to attuning our will to God's will, we must set aside all training that interferes with experiencing unity with God (what Jesus called "oneness" as recorded in John 17). To attain complete unity or oneness between your will and God's will requires you to set aside your ego and rediscover your heart's desire and freedom to agree with God no matter how much social pressure may appear to be applied to the contrary. For those of us who have been socialized to survive in an ego-based society, such a transformation may call us to emerge beyond ties with people who adhere to the ego's way of relating, devote a period of time to shedding the ego's way and perhaps distance ourselves from ego-bound people – at least temporarily. While emerging and shedding, to some extent we volunteer to be exposed to the pains and fears associated with social rejection and abandonment as a "price" to be paid for transitioning beyond ego into oneness. That's why Jesus was foretold to be "despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Isaiah 53:3 (ESV) Because Jesus charted the way for us, we can move forward with him as followers and trust that he will comfort us and heal the pain we encounter.

In becoming aware of our oneness with God, we may endure acute awareness of our apparent separation from others who were once and may still remain significant as family members and friends. Fears associated with separation from loved ones arise as if to counsel against continuing on our quest to know the experience of oneness with God. In defending its occupation of our minds, the ego argues that experiencing oneness with God is the same as experiencing total loneliness or separation from all other forms of human contact that we naturally crave. We can endure the heartache of transformation as love flows through to comfort and heal us as we choose to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God." (Micah 6:8) Humility shared with others is a condition for ego-dissolving oneness in our walk together. We need not feel alone as we share our journey of heart-transformation and mind-renewal.

When two or more people support each other in our quest for freedom to merge into oneness with the will of God, there are great yet mysterious rewards that hardly seem imaginable at the outset of our shared journey. Jesus promises to be present within our relationships as well as within our hearts. (Matthew 18:20) This mutual support is devoted to the highest purpose in service to humankind. It is also an example of collaborative stewardship in operation, as humans seek together to tap into and be guided by collective awareness of the Supreme One's wisdom (by whatever name the Divine is called.)

### *Spirit Field (Spiritual Potential)*

As already mentioned, the three inner fields of Spirit, Will and Mind reflect the idea of the trinity as presented in many Christian traditions – the Supreme Being composed of the “Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Our challenge is to develop our wholeness to express the Will of God through the Mind of Christ as guided by the Holy Spirit, all working together for good within each of us for all of us. The WA provides a way to visualize how these three love-bound fields of the Creator’s nature manifest through us as we nurture our divine nature. The WA’s simple six-part diagram helps us to understand who we are to God and how we relate to God’s plan of creation and to each other within that plan as carried out on earth. Throughout all of our stages of development, it is vital to acknowledge our inner nature and discipline ourselves to be aware of the Spirit’s guidance. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through our own spirits. We fail to listen to that guidance when we mistakenly identify ourselves merely as egos living in bodies in a material world. As modern society has become increasingly more materialistic, we risk giving ultimate worth to false idols to which we attach financial and social value. Ego does its best to override and silence the Spirit’s voice and direct our listening capacity outward to hear and heed voices from the ego’s world.

The position of Spirit opposite Body on the WA highlights the role of Spirit in caring for the health of our body when we allow it to. Yet, in an overly aggressive society in which competition for every scrap of social approval is standard, we discount the value of being humble, gentle and receptive as Spirit is. Spirit is often associated with feminine qualities considered less powerful and important than masculine qualities. Men are especially prone to feel ashamed of appearing “weak” when following the Spirit’s guidance. The Divine Spirit is a Spirit of Truth and Love. If we listen to it, it sets us free of ego’s bondage to unhealthy lifestyles. If we fail to listen, we slide into unhealthy habits and eventually experience chronic emotional pain with adverse effects in our bodies and minds. Emotional pain cries out through bodily symptoms of ill-health in many forms. When Jesus heals, he responds to our heart’s cry for relief and sets in motion a new freedom to allow love to flow through us as life’s restoring energy.

As previously discussed, the association between the Spirit Field and the Emotions Field is vital to our health and happiness. Our spirit listens to emotional energy within us and our relationships. Our listening spirit empowers our capacity for empathy and compassion. We care best for ourselves and each other when we remain sensitive to emotions and not afraid to explore, express and experience them. And yet, if we do not know how to process and release the emotional energy we sense, we can burn out from “compassion fatigue.” Wisdom counsels that we learn to regularly let go and give our hearts to God for

healing, as many of our worship songs encourage us to do. We are wise to practice health on God's terms and give our cares to the one who cares for us, not to deny our wholehearted emotions as if we no longer care but to renew our strength to keep on caring.

Our spirit is the aspect of our wholeness that is gentlest and most sensitive to how others are feeling. To enhance the value of the WA as a guide, you may find it helpful to imagine (or even draw) a heart shape extending the Spirit Field and

“Spirit of God, descend upon my heart, wean it from earth, through all its pulses move, stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art and make me love thee as I ought to love.”  
George Croly

Emotions Field to link them in a super-Valentine-shaped interconnected field. The Valentine's graceful upper curves bridge the petals of the Spirit Field and Emotions Field to represent the flow of energy communicating between these fields. Instead of allowing this energy to flow freely, the ego creates barriers between these fields by teaching us to hide our emotions within our minds rather than to share them. As a result, we may numb ourselves to emotions in general. When we become desensitized, our emotional health falters along with the declining health of our relationships, minds, wills and bodies.

In the process of conforming to the ego pattern of decreasing sensitivity to emotions, we cut ourselves off from vital information we need to respond to each other with empathy and compassion. In addition, we learn to allow others to manipulate us emotionally and fail to exercise our full power to maintain our wholeness. This downward spiral is the pattern of addictions and dependencies of every type. It is why our society is awash with addictive lifestyles of varied styles but all rooted in fear. To reverse this downwardly spiraling pattern, we need to renew awareness of our true nature as God's children and practice living by faith in Divine Love's power to comfort, heal and bless us. The Toolkit offers tools to set us free to enjoy our renewed awareness and share it with others.

Please keep in mind that this booklet introduces love's basic ideas and the process of experiencing love. It does not “explain” in detail “about” love because it trusts that the Spirit of Truth and Love will reveal more to you as you talk about and practice the basic ABCs of love. To explain too much risks my pretending to know all there is to know and it risks making a dogma out of a set of words. As Jesus did once, it is now ours to do – to make the word “love” become a living presence, an energy ever-radiating within and beyond our bodies but not equated with our bodies. As we are often reminded, others will know that we are followers of Jesus by the nature and scope of the love we share. It is time to be known by more than our words. It is time to be known by our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, commitments and actions – our very lifestyles – that are fully consistent with our words. The time for being lukewarm or lacking in convictions and corresponding commitments is over. It's time to encourage each of us to grow in wisdom and stature in the eyes of God as Jesus did and now calls us each to do as a gathering of diverse children nurtured by Truth and Love from within our hearts and minds. Deep inside we do not want to defy God as egos do. Our hearts desire to cooperate with love and together blossom and grow in its light forever.

“ . . . the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything. He will remind you of everything that I have ever told you.”  
Jesus (John 14:26)

The ABCs of love encourage our cooperation. As we practice them we will each take root, blossom and unfold like a unique flower rising to share love's sacred light. Thus the Garden of Eden will return and we will behold it because we are it.

### **Healthy Emotions Map (Refer to Toolkit Illustration 3)**

Since the ego's interference with our development as whole persons focuses heavily on the Emotions Field, we need to focus our recovery efforts on that field too. The Healthy Emotions Map (HEM) is designed to aid in managing our emotions and cooperatively participating in their healing through the process of grief and in their naturally sustainable health through the process of gratitude. It may be helpful to imagine that the ego has turned the field of our emotions into a battlefield in its efforts to occupy our minds and enslave our wills. The ego assaults our emotions because they are one of our most vulnerable traits. As children our tender hearts are easily hurt. Emotional pain caused by egos' interactions with our innocent hearts motivates us to develop protection. So, we form our own ego to supposedly protect us amid the battles of will that many relationships become. Later we discover that the ego's way of protecting our vulnerability while seeking to win these contests turns out to be a castle-prison that entraps our true nature within the image of a false one. To protect from pain we encounter when we expose our hearts, the ego trains us to pretend to be someone other than who we truly are.

Fear is the ego's main weapon in fighting for control of our minds. Fear itself is only one of our emotions. But the ego makes of it a toxic weapon to manipulate and control our decisions and shape our lifestyles into ego-patterns. By threat of punishment and promise of reward, the ego trains us to obey other egos, form our own ego and then obey our own ego. We take to heart ego-lessons on how to cope and put on ego-armor. We are no longer free to be and express gracefully who we really are. In time, ego manipulates all of our emotions to wrap us within the web of deception that is the ego. The ego's essence is illusion. It is a master con artist and tricks us into becoming the most artful pretender (successful ego) we can learn to be. When we observe life with wisdom, we notice that many of those who seem to succeed in modern society are the most deceitful and dishonest about their emotions. They operate with hidden agendas to charm or bully us into going along with them even when it's clearly not in our best interests to do so. We abandon long-term values and focus only on short-term ones.

Rather than attempt to polish our egos as if their glossy shine will allow us to be truly free and happy, we must learn to see through the ego's short-sighted con games and set aside our loyalty to the ego's way of engaging in life. We must admit that the ego offers only fool's gold, not real gold. At best it is plated with a thin layer of gold beneath which it remains dull and worthless. Noticing its foolish deceitfulness, we must see our own ego in action and choose to no longer cooperate with it. We must not mistake ourselves to be the worthlessness of the ego. It has played us false – deceived us into believing that our true nature lacks value and must be kept secret if we are to survive in ego's society. We can emerge beyond the ego as we gently shed the ego's disguises we adopted to keep our true nature safely hidden and instead dare to stand up for ourselves as we truly are.

Being bolder in this way seems risky. It's painful to admit what fools we've been trained to seem. Reviving wisdom causes us to see the contrast and feel ashamed and guilty for having ever doubted our true worth as God's creations. Boldly adopting an alternative to the ego risks possible insults and assaults from those who remain loyal to their egos and are frightened by the changes they see taking place. Those who remain temporarily loyal to the ego will continue to use fear to try to control us so as to protect their egos. They will want to preserve the status quo to which they have adjusted as egos. They may accuse us of betraying them while they continue to mistakenly identify with their egos. We cannot master the art of integrity without taking the risk of offending our own and others' egos. Yet this is the risk Jesus calls us to take as we follow him to co-create the dominion of unconditional love on Earth as it is in Heaven.

To no longer be controlled by ego's emotional games, we must become familiar with the nature of emotions and grow to distinguish between healthy expressions of emotions and unhealthy ones. That's the function of the Healthy Emotions Map (HEM) (Illustration 3). If we realize that the ego's relationships battles have left our heart scarred and shattered, we can accept that our heart is wounded and confused just as any battlefield veteran may become. The battle fatigue we feel is understandable. To some degree we are all veterans of the ego's battles to occupy our minds by invading through our hearts.

The HEM works like a map to help us chart our way through our heart's battlefield and heal the harm the ego left behind as it rampaged there. Using it re-organizes our emotions so that our minds can feel greater comfort with them and let go of the ego's deceptive ways of using them. As we take full responsibility for being aware of and expressing our emotions by using the HEM, we discover new power to be in control of our lives and feel safer without needing to use our own egos to defend, attack and protect as we have done before. We use the HEM to disarm emotions and grow to see them not as weapons but as expressions of life's most tender qualities. To the extent that we've acquired "trigger issues" or readily pushed "buttons" in arming our emotions as weapons, we've been building IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) of our own kind. We can disarm them and commit to no longer building them. Until we disarm our IEDs, they remain hidden, putting relationships at risk of blowing up.

In making wise, patient, faithful use of the HEM, we can learn to no longer be afraid of the stranger that our heart has become under the ego's influence. We no longer remain attached to the unruly emotional chaos that the ego creates and causes us to believe is the only option we have. It is true that emotions are not the same as thoughts. It is true that we can often organize our thoughts more readily than we organize our feelings. Yet, it is helpful to discover how emotions function as a natural, beneficial field of our wholeness and learn to manage our emotions rather than allow them to mismanage us.

### *Our Choice to Be Emotionally Healthy*

Whether our emotions feel in healthy condition or in shambles may depend upon the experiences we've encountered so far in life and how long we've been struggling. Acute traumas may leave us in shock. Long-term, chronic struggles can be especially overwhelming and wearying. But, no matter how

in shambles we may feel emotionally – no matter how emotionally weary we may feel as veterans of life’s struggles – we always have the choice to establish emotional health and learn to live free of the ego’s former power to subjugate our wills and cause us to live in ways we do not prefer. We are emotionally resilient beings. We can recover our health. Because our wills remain healthy and resourceful within our wholeness, we need not conform to ego’s patterns as if permanently entrapped by the ego as its victims. We can commit ourselves to health in all fields of wholeness. By committing ourselves to emotional health, we also commit ourselves to healthy relationships as we share ourselves with others as whole persons instead of as egos.

If we see our egos as clunky suits of armor we once wore on our relationship battlefields, we can also see how they became heavy, rusted and more awkward and tiring to wear than to discard. Do we truly want to resolve every difference we encounter in our relationships by battling over it until someone feels defeated or gives up? Is that the graceless, loveless life our hearts desire? Or does Jesus’ vision of peace among people of goodwill appeal more to us? Does the possibility of sharing in God’s grace and justice throughout our lives call to the depths of our beings? We can commit our whole lives to peace and goodwill and live as Jesus’ grace-filled, justice-creating disciples. As we discipline our minds to receive wisdom’s guidance, Jesus will show us how to receive rest for our hearts and souls.

The message of the HEM is bold. It says we can choose which emotions we prefer to experience. Choosing to prefer pleasant emotions over painful ones does not mean that we’ll never experience unpleasant or painful emotions or that some emotions on the HEM are “good” or “healthy” while others are “bad” or “unhealthy.” All emotions are healthy when they alert us to how we’re doing in life and can choose to communicate and share more love and less fear. The ego used pleasant emotions to reward and painful ones to punish as it shaped our thinking, choices and actions to conform to its patterns. If we allow it, ego will continue to abuse emotions in that unhealthy way. We need not feel ashamed of having been under ego’s power or guilty about having misused emotions in any way. Our egos want us to feel that way. But our authentic nature yearns to live in the company of all who choose to love God and one another unconditionally. We can outgrow relating to our emotions on ego’s terms. Just as the father in the prodigal son story welcomed his life-seasoned child home with open arms, God welcomes us as we return from our ego-world tour where we once befriended, surrendered to and served the ego.

### *Choosing to Progress along Love’s Pathways*

Love offers us a way to exercise our will in favor of love in managing our emotions. We do not have to manage them the way we’ve learned under the ego’s influence. We can choose to use any or all of Love’s pathways shown on the HEM’s legend.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Jesus (Matthew 11:28-29)

"So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

From Jesus’ parable (Luke 15:20)

## F1 – Pathway of Forgiveness from Anger to Peace

In the modern world where the energy of violence sweeps through most communities, anger is common. It is common not because we are becoming “bad” people. It is common because we are tender-hearted people who feel pain when we experience loss or harm and do not know how to heal our heartaches. Since we do not know how to heal heartaches and live in a world that is ignorant about healing emotional pain, we adopt the uninformed ways of those around us and suffer, often in silence. It is past time to overcome our collective ignorance and to participate in healing regularly rather than rarely.

Anger is a natural emotional signal that we are in pain. Few people are able to experience pain without also feeling angry, at least some of the time. Anger is “secondary” to pain. Pain beneath anger is the “primary” issue. Because we tend to judge anger to be “bad” or a sign of weakness – or alternatively praise it as a false sign of power – we fail to look beneath our anger for its roots in pain. Anger causes us to react as if the solution is to stifle and stuff it inside or lash out and inflict pain on ourselves or someone else. We often cope with pain in harmful ways while failing to cope with it in healthy ways. By using the HEM and other tools in this booklet, we learn to reach out with humility rather than to lash out with pride or shame. We do not have to live with anger as if it’s permanent and thereby perpetuate violence. To promote peace instead, we have options, one of which is forgiveness, the path of the F1 arrow. It runs from anger to peace as a choice of emotional states. If we follow Jesus, we use the path of forgiveness to resolve painful issues. It’s a path he modeled throughout his life on earth.

The practice of forgiveness is not easy to adopt after we’ve learned well how to handle anger as the ego uses it. A few unhelpful, false beliefs that the ego holds onto as excuses for failing to forgive are:

- False Belief: Before you forgive you need to identify the wrong done and make sure that you or the other person knows how wrong you, he or she was. The ego makes a battle between “right” and “wrong” an essential part of its version of forgiveness. It presents forgiveness as a noble gift you give to yourself or another person only after you, he or she admits being at fault and confesses being guilty. This version of forgiveness resurrects your pride as a response to shame you may feel because of pain. This is not Jesus’ version of forgiveness. His version has nothing to do with preserving pride, shame, guilt or blame in you or any other person. After he was resurrected, Jesus was aware that most of his disciples had abandoned him to suffer alone. Yet, upon his return from the tomb, his first word to them was “Peace.” Can we do likewise when we’ve been hurt, even hurt badly while abandoned? We can with Love’s help and with support within the “beloved community.”
- False Belief: Forgiveness means forgetting the pain and exposing yourself to more pain. There is nothing about true forgiveness that requires you to fail to learn any lesson that pain offers to teach. Later in this booklet, I present cycles of violation and how we can dissolve any cycle that may be at work in our lives and create a life freer of painful violations. The ego teaches us to endure pain to

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, . . . First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."  
Jesus Matthew 5:23-24

feel less alone, financially more secure or for some other excuse the ego gives for returning to painful experiences that wisdom would guide us to move beyond. Forgiveness as Jesus defines it does not require us to fail to gain wisdom from life's lessons. Healthy use of forgiveness allows us to learn, remember our lessons and build upon them to create progressively improving lifestyles.

- False Belief: Forgiveness is a gift you give the “other.” While it is true that forgiving helps another to feel less guilty and freer to move forward in life, that is not the only effect of forgiveness. Forgiving allows you to move forward in life without the burden that unforgiveness imposes. Forgiveness is one of the means by which Jesus keeps his promise that our burdens will be light if we follow him. Whatever our burdens, they are lighter when we do not carry along past pain. By forgiving ourselves and others, we let go of past pain and enter into each day with a lighter heart and clearer mind.

Forgiveness is not typically instantaneous in its attainment or benefits. It is a process that takes place in steps – often with back steps or “relapses.” Steps of compassionate grieving allow us to come to forgive with wholehearted relief that the pain is finally gone, even when memories remain. The G1 path discussed below takes us through the stages of grief by which we receive the healing offered by humility beyond the ego. Pride and shame together with guilt and blame are obstacles to overcome along this path.

## F2 – Pathway of Faithfulness from Fear to Hope

The ego thrives by promoting, perpetuating and pumping up ever-escalating cycles of fear. It's the grand master of propaganda, diversionary actions, “shock and awe” and similar tactics in the battle for our hearts and minds. It wants us to feel utterly hopeless and powerless in the face of the ego's seeming defeat of all alternatives. Yet Jesus presents the alternative of love and its healing power to counteract fear and its destructive impact within our hearts and minds. Love is the antidote for all of fear's poisons. Jesus calls us to place all of our faith in his alternative and to devote our lives to living according to love's principles and practices. Uttermost faithfulness is Path F2. By faith, we rise from utter despair to irresistible hope. Faith is our investment in the mysteries of a process that leads us to experience the not-yet-seen-but-promised outcomes Jesus helps us to attain.

“My eyes are looking at the faithful of the land, so they may live with me; The one who lives a life of integrity will serve me.”  
Psalm 101:6 (ISV)

Hope may seem fragile. Yet, it is resilient. Like love, it endures all things. No matter how utterly hopeless our fears may cause us to feel, our hopeless state will not last when we exercise faith – both by standing in faith and by moving forward in faith. Once we savor the smallest taste of being faithful, we become hooked on the practice of faithfulness as the true alternative – faithfulness no longer to the ego but to God. We all have faith. The vital difference arises from what we invest our faith in. This booklet invites you to invest your faith in the most excellent way of divine love and allow it to lift your heart and mind to cultivate the content of character of which MLK Jr. spoke. From the Innernet Love Provider we can download character updates continuously. To protect our hearts we can install a Spirit-energized firewall and anti-ego software. The ABCs of love are a reliable anti-ego program for all who desire to be included among the people God calls to set love free to heal our nation and the world.

### F3 – Pathway of Friendship from Sorrow to Joy

Path F3 invokes the benefits of sharing our hearts any time we are feeling down and want to be lifted up. Sharing within relationships we claim as friendships (or fellowships) allows us to “trust, feel and talk about things that matter.” We need to practice these principles of healthy relationships to reap the fruits of them. More than that, we need to practice the orientation and skills of servant-leaders on Jesus’ model if we are to encounter the joy he has in store for us. Our hearts desire to know that our significance to God exceeds merely wanting us to return home from our exploration of the ego’s world. We yearn to be sent out into the ego’s world as bearers of the light, ones who have invested ourselves in divine treasures and seek to be servant-leaders who “do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.” (Micah 6:8) We deceive ourselves if we believe we’ll ever be content with giving God anything less than our best. Through my own experiences, I’ve found that every time I give my best to God, God gives back to me upgrades beyond what I once thought was best. Joy as God defines joy is the experience Jesus knew and wants us to know. When Jesus wept at Lazarus’ tomb, his tears of sorrow were mixed with tears of joy because he knew that he was on a path of empowerment by which to set the whole world free from ego’s heart-entombing captivity and bring sight to the minds of all who turn our hearts to God in prayer. Now he calls his followers to embody this Good News throughout the world. Our greatest joy flows from sharing love’s blessings.

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”  
John – 3 John 1:4 (NIV)

### G1 – Pathway of Grieving through Painful Emotions to Peace

The paths designated by F’s rise directly towards their goal of transforming our heart’s experiences from painful emotions of brokenness to pleasant ones of wholeness. The paths designated by G’s pass around the HEM to achieve progress towards the same goal in a more thorough manner. If we can visualize the burdens of painful emotions we’ve amassed as happening within the context of time, we can imagine that the G-paths move counterclockwise to undo the effects of time. The “renewal of our minds” to which Paul invites us is part of the renewal of wholeness, integrity and content of character we seek to bring MLK Jr.’s “beloved community” and Jesus’ “kingdom of God” vibrantly alive as a sustainable presence on Earth. Passage of the Civil Rights Act did not produce a sustainable community of transformed citizens because we need more than laws to empower such a transformation. Laws work on us from the outside and do not generate lasting results unless the Spirit is working on the inside to transform us not merely into law-abiding citizens but Spirit-abiding ones. Spirit-abiding citizens walk humbly with God doing justice and loving mercy whether or not society’s laws require it. Those whose ego continue to rule their lives will find ways around society’s laws no matter how righteously written or rigorously enforced they may be. To “seek first the kingdom of God” is not to seek an external social culture governed by human laws and traditions but to seek an internal spiritual condition governed by love’s principles and practices that nurture integrity, authenticity and humility.

“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”  
Matthew 25:21 (ESV)

G1's curving path illustrates the flexible course grief takes as we move through its stages from anger to admitting the fears that underlie and seem to justify our anger. We have to face our fears within our hearts. We do so when we are reminded that our worst fears are simply not true. One of our worst fears is that we are alone and always will be alone in the world no matter how trustworthy even the best of our family members and friends are. To overcome that fear we need to reconnect to the Source of Life to experience the reassuring miracle that Love is always with us. This comfort we sample when we trust that others will be there for us as we process our grief and let go of all our grievances. This is a G-path because it is strewn with petals of gentleness, generosity and grace that others remind us God is casting along the way. From Anger through Fear to Sorrow and then to Peace, the transformation within our hearts is not instant nor is it always steady. It typically pulses along, reflecting the steadfastness of our practice of the ABCs of love. The pattern of our heartbeat is a metaphor. God provides an endless stream of encouragement for our spiritual hearts to pump through our futile imaginings to cast out all fear.

One False Belief associated with the G1 path is that once you've addressed an emotional issue the issue is forever totally resolved. In truth, healing through grieving is a gentle process that allows us to revisit some issues over and over again to work through them in steps. Trying in one huge step to resolve major issues of pain long entombed in our hearts and minds is too much to ask of ourselves. When we are ready, we will delve into an issue as much as we are able and then set it aside until we have acquired a greater capacity to address it again. Grief is in part a process of growth. To be free to grow, we explore lessons from our past that we buried (along with their emotions). In the present, we now learn those postponed lessons by heart, preparing us to handle more of life. This process transforms us into new wineskins into which life's sweetest wine can be entrusted as we expand our capacity to share the wine of life with others as Jesus did and still does. The G1 path also allows us to grow closer with one another and with God in "bonding experiences" as we realize the value of practicing honesty and trust. Along the G1 path we unlearn many of ego's subtlest lessons in mistrust and dishonesty and detach from our identity as suffering souls. We discover new power to exercise our free wills with love's grace!

## G2 – Pathway of Gratitude throughout All Pleasant Emotions

The G2 path is a life-enriching path beyond grief. We travel it as we share God's peace with others – having ourselves felt the inner relief of God's Presence in our times of need. As G1 is a path of grief, G2 is a path of relief beyond grief. Both are paths of grace. Along G2 we grow to honor every kind and degree of emotions by listening, sometimes in silence, to help ourselves and others know that we are not alone no matter how much our overwhelming emotions may convince us that we are. As we explore the G2 path, we are free to travel back and forth and even to revisit emotions associated with the G1 path as need arises. We grow in confidence that we can return to gratitude by choice and resume knowing the peace of God within our hearts wherever we choose to set aside our cares, count our blessings and share God's grace. Even when we forget who we are to God, God never forgets. Communion with God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and all who love and honor God is enriched by our walk along the G2 path.

Jesus has path G2 in mind when he reassures us that he will be with us anytime we gather in his name. He knows that his name will remind us of his whole nature and of our own. Calling his name reminds us that we are members of the same divine family – in a way that the ego knows not of. Sensing God’s response to our needs, we receive reassuring divine love as no ego can provide. We no longer feel as great a need to be protected from adversity because we face life knowing that Jesus always nurtures in us the child-of-God nature that is ours as well as his. In using the HEM, we cease to take life’s gifts for granted and grow in certainty that faith empowers gratitude for all that is God-given to replace pride in what we once mistook as self-made. G1 and G2 paths combine to convey our hearts from anger towards God into reverence for The Holy One who extends no wrath towards us but only unfailing welcome.

### *Exploring All Emotions as Healthy*

Because the ego thinks in terms of opposites, it labels some emotions “good” and some “bad.” To outgrow ego’s mistaken ideas about emotions we must substitute new ideas. The HEM helps us to do that. One way it helps is to remove the stark contrast of “good” and “bad” from the picture and replace it with “pleasant” and “painful.” It makes sense to prefer pleasant emotions over painful ones, but it is unhealthy to arbitrarily decide that painful ones are “bad” and try to exile them from our lives artificially. If we attempt to cut off emotions that we decide we don’t want to feel, we risk reducing our sensitivity to all emotions and may become numb to all of them. Hard-heartedness gradually substitutes for tender-heartedness as we fall into that trap. Emotions, like wholeness, open as a flower when we honor all emotional energy as healthy. Open-heartedness empowers us to have empathy and compassion for ourselves and others. It takes courage to renew that heart-state. That’s why the word “courage” comes from the root “couer” (meaning “heart.”) Couer also suggests that our heart is the core of our being, the wellspring of love’s energy in the depth of our being. It is unnecessary to expect ourselves to always have pure hearts. It is only required of us that we master the art of surrendering our heart to the Spirit routinely for cleansing and softening. In that way we will live with our hearts close to God’s own heart.

“Create in me a clean heart,  
O God, and renew a  
steadfast spirit within me.”  
Psalm 51:10 (NASB)

### *Anger*

In exploring our emotions, let’s begin with Anger. Here’s an excellent example of how the HEM simplifies the wide variety of labels ego uses to confuse our understanding of emotions and thwart our efforts to manage them. The HEM displays only six emotions. These are categories of emotions. In other materials about emotions, you will find longer lists and more elaborate diagrams. The HEM offers the possibility of seeing these other labels as details about emotions that fit into six basic categories. Subtle differences are present within the emotions detailed in other materials. However, let’s not allow details to cloud our understanding of love’s grand design for emotions or to prevent us from managing them well. Using many detailed labels is a left-brain analytical approach to emotions. This approach is of limited helpfulness because emotions are largely a right-brain topic. The HEM calls for use of our right brain to visualize and explore the elegant design and dynamics of emotions beyond static details.

The HEM suggests that we look at our emotions in a way similar to how we might look at the colors of the rainbow or color spectrum. As with colors, emotions can blend gradually from one to the next and combine hues to create a variety of impressions. Yet within the array of all possible hues there remain basic or “primary” colors – usually, but not always, defined as red, yellow and blue. Red + yellow = orange. Red + blue = purple. Yellow + blue = green. Subtle shades appear as we mix primary colors differently. We can produce grey by combining all colors as pigments – while in the energy of visible light we find that all colors exist in what we see as white. By refraction we can divide white light into a spectrum of different colors to create a rainbow. Although the color metaphor has limits in helping to understand emotions, the HEM utilizes colors to help map out the territory of emotions by fields without creating the false impression that any single emotion exists without being an integral part of the whole. The metaphor also calls to mind how colorless life would be without emotions to enliven and enrich it.

Like all categories of emotions, anger is an emotion within which varying intensities carry different labels. It helps to realize that anger’s various intensities that carry different labels still express the primary characteristics of anger. As the HEM depicts by the “Emotional Energy Level” symbol, one of Anger’s primary characteristics is high emotional energy. Anger is packed with energy. The HEM also depicts it as one of our painful emotions of brokenness. Thus, anger may be defined as a painful emotion with great energy. Frustration is a mild hint of anger. Rage is a form of anger that expresses a huge level of painful energy. Resentment is another form of anger. It may seem to lack the great energy that characterizes anger until we realize that resentment is densely packed anger that has been stored up for so long that its state has hardened like water becomes ice or a living plant or animal becomes a fossil. Bitterness is a more compact variant of resentment, like a “bitter pill to swallow.” Cold-hearted or hard-hearted people are full of anger that has turned to resentment and bitterness. Their anger hardened while it was buried away and unexpressed from past painful experiences. The ego’s habitual pattern of hiding, stuffing and burying emotions causes this to happen. People who turn cold-hearted or hard-hearted are not “bad” people. They are in pain and yet have forgotten the cause of their pain because ego trained them to forget the cause and to pretend that “it” never happened, whatever the “it” may have been.

Through the eyes of wisdom and compassion, we can view anger-burdened people as emotionally wounded and in need of healing, not as “bad” or “undesirable.” Yet, when a person “acts out” anger instead of processing it in healthy ways as the HEM permits, the outcome of his or her actions can result in more pain – to the actor and to those who receive the actions. When a person fails to find relief from emotional pain, he or she can become depressed or otherwise decline into a state of ill-health mentally, physically and socially. Anger is rarely if ever creative. It tends to be destructive. In the process of transforming from the pattern of the ego to the pattern of love, we need to practice relating to anger in healthy ways and accept it as one of our healthy emotions. Anger serves its purpose as a signal of pain. We can learn to listen to anger without judging ourselves or anyone else “wrong” for becoming angry. Although the ego uses emotions of all kinds as excuses to judge us, we can outgrow that habit.

Some people have learned to identify anger as an expression of power, when in fact it is a sign of weakness arising from painful wounds that have not yet healed. Anger causes us to put others at a distance, sometimes precisely when we need to have someone whom we trust close by. Anger is a cry for love, a cry of pain voiced by a person who is struggling in a wilderness of fear. Expressing emotional energy forcefully as anger is counterproductive. Such expressions energize cycles of violation discussed later. Anger drives us apart from each other while peace allows us to draw together. We hear love's invitation to join humanity's oneness more clearly when peace fills us than when anger thrills or chills us.

How do we progress from a state of anger of any intensity to an emotional state more productive than perpetual anger? We begin by accepting anger (or any other emotional state) for how it is right now and having faith that painful emotions are not permanent. By faith that healing takes place through the process of grief, we can join in upholding each other's value and worthiness to be loved even when angry. And we can celebrate with each other in times of gratitude. Time well-invested in grieving does heal all wounds. Time well-invested in gratitude sustains our health. We can make it the purpose of our time-investments to help each other heal and celebrate the progress we are making together in awakening from ego's reign of fear to renewed awareness of God's reign of love that casts out all fear.

When we edge counterclockwise beyond anger on the HEM, we encounter shades of emotions that blend anger with fear. In fact, it is helpful to realize how much fear supports our anger. For example, resentment and bitterness are rooted in the fear that our lives will never become less painful and we may as well resign ourselves to the suffering (chronic pain) that is our "lot in life." These heart-darkening emotions are infused with helplessness and hopelessness. Closely related to anger is envy. Envy blends angry responses to what we see as missing in our lives with the fear that others will have it easily but we will never have it no matter how much we try or feel we deserve it. Envy blinds us to the more expansive possibilities of life and ties us to the bitter past we believe is permanent. Envy arises from comparing ourselves to others and seeing the bleak side of the comparison, the side that seems unfair to the ego that hungers to amass pride and avoid shame and to do so as quickly as possible with as little effort as possible. Ego always tries to score points and to win instant gratification regardless of loss of integrity, as if all of life is a contest that sorts prideful winners from shameful losers. When envy arises it's a sign that a person has failed to understand how life works and prefers that magic will "fix" or make things better. One of the benefits of peace is that it is the condition within which our minds gain deeper understanding. Once blinded by anger and fear, we can let go of both and, with peace of mind, gain clarity of understanding. Then we accept life as it is – an ongoing process of growth and upgrades in what love values most – rather than resign to the false idea that nothing will ever favor us.

## Fear

On the HEM, fear stands at the bottom, at the pit of our emotions. It is the trigger emotion that alerts us to danger and reacts to anything in our environment that our ego registers as a threat. When fear alerts us to real danger, it is helpful. When false beliefs and mistaken perceptions

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment."  
1 John 4:18 (NIV)

trigger fear, it is stressfully misleading. It's the emotion we sometimes feel in the pit of our stomach when we panic in the face of challenges too great for us to handle alone. It can make us feel utterly alone and trigger downward spirals of despair. To sustain health, we must practice counteracting our fears with faith to avoid sinking into the pit of hell that seems to open beneath us when we are intensely afraid. The belief that God might condemn us to hell for any reason or no reason produces the worst fear imaginable. Those who believe in a God capable of condemning anyone to hell forever are exposed to our worst fear. Denial that God exists defends against the fear of failure and resulting punishment. Those who don't believe in God substitute other fears for this one.

Jesus' mission on Earth addresses the mistaken wrathful image of God and substitutes the truth that frees us from fears of all kinds. To make this point, his ministry included encounters with many people that the culture of his day labeled "sinners." To those whom his culture condemned, Jesus conveyed the alternative message of God's infinite grace and mercy. To demonstrate the nature of God's grace, Jesus became a person whom his culture condemned. To those accused of sin, he said, "Then neither do I condemn you." (John 8:11) He presented himself as the embodiment (incarnation) of God so that people could think differently about God and no longer fear God. He presented a forgiving God who desires our trust, gratitude, worship and reverence but not our fear. He calls his followers today to convey the same message to everyone who is afraid. His message is simple: God = perfect, unconditional love, the full nature of which is within us always, even when we forget that it is. Innocence is our created state as God's children, a nature egos treat as a myth. Our favorable standing with God includes everyone without exception. Jesus is not a myth and his message is not a myth. The HEM shows us how to experience the truth of God's love and share the heart of God forever regardless of how contrary that alternative may seem to others who continue to adhere to the ego's counterfeit life. The ego is a knock off, not the genuine article created by God in God's image and likeness. Using the Toolkit opens our hearts and minds to receive the truth and love God is sending to us as gifts of appreciation.

Fear varies in intensity just as anger does. The "Emotional Energy Level" scale positions fear as a medium energy emotion. It is associated with the pain of brokenness. Typically fear causes us to react within limited options of fighting, fleeing or freezing (paralysis). It is unhealthy to live in a chronic state of fear. Many symptoms of mental, physical and social ill-health are rooted in chronic fear. Our minds acquire habits like worrying and retain stress when exposed to chronic fear. Panic is an intense version of fear but it need not arise from a current situation. It can arise in seemingly unexplainable panic attacks caused by current thoughts that trigger deeply buried, long-ago-stored-and-forgotten fear. Terror is another intense version of fear. Feeling scared but not compelled to fight, flee or freeze evidences a mild state of fear while feeling startled out of proportion to current events as if facing a severe threat may evidence stored up fears that exaggerate our reactions to current events. People diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder often are easily startled because they continue to carry painful emotional wounds from past experiences that remain in need of healing.

Fear is not a “bad” or “shameful” emotion. Nor is it a sign of weakness. It is a signal that something in our lives needs to be addressed more effectively. That “something” may be present in our immediate environment, be active in our imaginations or be present in some other manner in our lives. We are not cowards for allowing ourselves to feel fear. We are simply sensitive people as God created us to be. It takes courage to face and deal effectively with our fears. Being insensitive and unresponsive to any emotional energy runs contrary to wisdom. This is true for at least two reasons. First, when we ignore our own fears we are taking unnecessary risks with our health. We need not be controlled by every fear, but we need to listen to fears we feel and process them openly to move past them with wisdom. Second, when we ignore fears within us we may be ignoring the energy of fear that we’ve picking up from our environment. To one degree or another, we can all sense emotional energy swirling in our social environment. It is wise to learn to be fully aware of such energy and process it in healthy ways. People classified by some as “hypersensitive” may actually be gifted by God to empathize readily with others in order to increase the likelihood that emotions will be brought out into the open and shared directly. Sensitivity to “hints” of emotions (of any kind) radiating from others may lead to more open sharing once the hints are followed up. Intuition is one name for our capacity to register such hints and respond.

**Possible wondering to stimulate thought and dialogue:** *What is an empath?*

As we learn to identify our fears and other emotions and explore them openly as healthy aspects of wholeness, we set ourselves free to move past them. Fears we name tend to shrink as obstacles to progress. Sharing emotions allows us to overcome our worst fear of being alone without anyone who accepts us as we are. By trustingly sharing our hearts, we grow wholehearted, no longer ego-thwarted.

### Sorrow

As the HEM illustrates, sorrow is a low energy category of emotion associated with the pain of brokenness. As we grieve through emotions that arise on account of painful losses, we move along Path G1 from higher energy emotions of anger through moderate energy emotions of fear to low energy emotions of sorrow. We progress from corrosive energy that eats at our lives from the inside towards energy levels that allow us to rest our minds and bodies and recover from brokenness more completely. The less energy we are fighting to contain the more energy we have to devote to recovery and new life beyond brokenness. When we “sit on our feelings” we invest energy in containment that we could otherwise invest in more constructive ways. We hire more guards to keep our hearts in prison instead of more gardeners to cultivate space for our hearts to thrive freely. Do you closely guard your heart as secret or caringly garden your heart as sacred?

**Possible wonderings to stimulate thought and dialogue:** *“Sacred” does not refer to morals but to health. God wants us to know that being healthy is the same as being holy. Wisdom counsels us, “Be ye healthy as God is healthy.” (1 Peter 1:16 paraphrased) In short, be who you are as God is “I am Who I am!” What might it mean that “sacred” and “scared” use the same letters?*

In the state of sorrow, we may feel freer to be honest. “I am sad” seems easier to admit than “I’m so angry I could . . . .” Yet we can find it challenging to identify when we are sad because it seems so low key. “I’m fine” or “I’m OK” is what we may say. Because in modern society depression is a normal, widespread emotional state, it is typical to compare ourselves with others and conclude we have nothing to complain about. Being honest about sorrow we feel may seem self-indulgent and ungrateful, as if we are wrong to feel sad. Sadness that becomes chronic turns into depression. It is often tinged with unresolved anger and fear that we tried to skip past instead of dealing with as thoroughly as would be healthier for us. It’s helpful to have at least one person in our lives with whom we can share the exploration of our emotions. If we allow these helpful people to give us feedback and listen, we may realize that we are sadder than we let ourselves know. I find it helpful to listen when a friend who knows me well says, “You look sad.” Or “Why do you seem so angry today?” Perhaps my face or body language is revealing emotions I need to admit are present within me. Honest feedback within myself and with others is part of my holistic lifestyle. Honesty of this nature helps prevent relapse into depression.

Honesty with our emotions is vital to all forms of relapse prevention. For example, addiction or dependency of any kind is often rooted in feelings of resentment, insecurity and inadequacy. To keep from relapsing back into cycles of addiction and dependency we need to watch for signs of such disabling emotions. We need to accept the possibility that they are present and can be addressed more effectively by honesty than addictions or dependency ever did. Addictions and dependencies of all kinds simply cover up our emotions rather than resolve them. Experts say that chemical addictions are ways to self-medicate pain. It’s possible to become addicted to one’s own body chemistry on account of habitual activities that trigger the body to produce mood-altering or pain-killing chemicals. Even activities that wisdom counsels us to include in our lifestyles to maintain our health can drift out of balance from helpful to harmful if we fail to stay alert to signs of misuse of those activities. Exercise, eating, sex, entertainment and work are some of those activities with potential to become out of balance. Using the I-Zones, WA and HEM helps us to monitor for signs of imbalance.

Sorrow is a gentle emotion. For those who have ever felt intense anger, we tend to like ourselves more when all we are is “sad.” We may feel like we’re having a good day when sad is “all” we are. Sorrow is a milestone that indicates progress on our journey through the territory of our emotions. Being sorrowful prepares us to rise gently into the field of peace beyond sorrow. We may slip into feeling peace of mind unexpectedly and be amazed at our arrival there. There are practices worth exploring that can promote that gentle release. One is meditation. In its many forms, meditation is a helpful practice. It is helpful even when we are angry or afraid. Learning to meditate in your own preferred way is a wise pursuit. Be gentle as you learn. Moving from anger to peace of mind through meditation is challenging. It’s unreasonable to expect to jump from high energy to low energy magically. But small steps help. In time the practice of meditation becomes another tool you can use to manage your emotions and lead you forward into a lifestyle you enjoy.

## *Continuing Our Shared Exploration of the Field of Emotions*

As we round the HEM from Anger through Fear to Sorrow, we're exploring categories of emotions associated with the pain of brokenness. We may be more familiar with these emotions than with those associated with wholeness. That makes sense in a culture filled with people suffering from emotions of chronic, multi-generational brokenness as well as of endless episodes of acute trauma. Our drift into lonely fragments of individualism mirrors our inner sense of brokenness. Our relationship struggles reflect our unhealed hearts. In guiding us to heal our hearts, the HEM also guides us to heal our relationships and overcome the societal breakdown that the ego has caused.

We practice the ABCs of love to practice creating a new society based on unity or oneness, no longer based on the assumption of separation into disunity and conflict. We experience what it means to "love one another" as Jesus loves. We experience walking our talk and practicing what we preach when we engage in the total trust and honesty that cures all degrees and varieties of hypocrisy. We experience what it means to accept ourselves and one another as "works in progress" as we develop the "content of our characters" and no longer practice the ego's habits of judging and condemning ourselves and one another. By this experience we are becoming increasingly aware of our natural wholeness and capacities for authenticity and integrity. Ceasing to be defensive as egos are, we gain the courage to welcome feedback that alerts us to improvements in our character that remain for us to address. And we're realizing how we can truly honor and love ourselves as we honor and love our neighbors.

Our desire to belong may hold us to the painful emotions of brokenness as if they define us. We may assume that pain and suffering are inherent in our identities and inevitable in the society to which we belong. In resisting the possibility of our creating an ego-free society of unconditional, healing love, our false identity called "ego" would have us continue to cower in or near the field of fear and conclude that we've completed our exploration of emotions once we've arrived in the field of sorrow. But we have not. Neither fear's perpetual sorrow nor its endlessly recycled suffering is our final destination. The rarer emotions of peace, hope and joy wait for us to enter, explore and sustain as more common. Wisdom bids us to remain more and more aware of peace, hope and joy in our hearts even while we remain exposed to the painful emotions others have not yet resolved and released within their own lives.

Continuing to explore emotions beyond sorrow requires us to consider the ethics of our journey. For example, is it ethical or "fair" for us to feel at peace while conflicts rage around us? Are we selfish to feel hope when others feel only the hopelessness of chronic fear? Do the prevailing feelings of hopelessness others feel allow room for us to feel hope and even to share our hope with those who currently feel no hope and see no reason for it? To not be selfish, should we hide the joy we sometimes feel so that others won't feel bad by comparison when joy eludes them? Let's address these valid concerns that sensitive people may have.

Empathy and compassion involve being sensitive to the emotional energy flowing within and around us. These qualities of wholeness are not intellectual qualities. It is not healthy to intellectualize

our emotions. Our minds become aware of emotions because our hearts sense them. There is a neural network within our chest and abdomen that senses and communicates information to our brains. The physical heart itself creates an electromagnetic field that radiates beyond our bodies and allows us to interact with the comparable fields of others. We live in the physical realm as expressions of energy we call love. Ego can train us to block out awareness of love's energy but it still exists. Practicing the ABCs of love renews our capacity to sense and make use of our awareness of energy the ego trains us to ignore.

It may help to imagine that the WA works like a satellite dish. When it is open and available for healthy engagement, it receives more information than when it is shut down and disengaged. Receptivity is a quality of wholeness that allows us to feel empathy and compassion. In dividing humanity into artificial subdivisions, the ego typically labels receptivity as a feminine quality and labels men who are emotionally sensitive as "less masculine" than those who are insensitive. Some cultures train their boys not to cry because they deem tears to be a sign of weakness. Yet to be aware, sensitive, receptive to and expressive of emotional energy is to be whole and healthy instead of artificially divided into broken fragments as egos. Healthy human beings of all gender traits and orientations cry. God designed us to be tender-hearted and open to all of humanity. Otherwise nurturing ourselves and others is impossible.

Is it ethical to be healthy in the presence of those who are unhealthy? The answer may seem obvious but it's the same question as the one we asked about feeling joy while others feel sorrow or hope when others feel hopeless. Ethics focus on the rules – what Jesus called "the law." He said that he came not to deny the merits of the law but to fulfill the law. Likewise, we who resume being whole are not denying the merits of ethics but are fulfilling the ethical principle of doing the greatest good for the greatest number. By modeling wholeness and the process of recovering and sustaining it, we invite all to rediscover their capacity to resume living as whole persons. We give the gift of hope of resuming wholeness to those who assume that the ego's limitations define life. We give it to keep it alive in us. To share our stories of transformation beyond ego to wholeness is part of our purpose as Jesus' followers. We glorify God because we know that our resumption of wholeness is a gift, not a work we do on our own, but a work God does within us as divine children who had for a time forgotten our true nature.

A world in pain needs to know that the solution God offers as the alternative exists. Although every person retains free will, many are unaware of the choice not to remain in the ego's reign of fear and suffering. The reign of love offers release from suffering. We can model the alternative so that every person can exercise free will again and make a new choice to enter into the peace of God as Jesus did and live again in peace and goodwill with others rather than assume that cycles of violence will never cease.

Sensitivity to others does require us to care about how we present this alternative. We cannot drag anyone into the reign of love or even insist that they consider it. It is both unkind and unethical to flaunt the alternative as if to say that those who are not yet aware of it are a permanent "losers" while we are "winners." God chooses all to participate in the alternative. All are chosen. None are not chosen. Any delay in participation is not caused by God but by the ego to which some people continue to cling

rather than let go. All we do is be present with everyone as expressions of God's love – ready, willing and able to share the truth in ways to which others may be receptive. A person in pain is not readily receptive to spoken messages. Yet, we may risk offering words not of advice but of comfort when we feel inspired to share them from our hearts. At times it may be more helpful to remain silent and simply be present while we listen with open hearts and minds.

We can pray silently while we listen. We can make it clear that we are paying full attention by not allowing our minds to wander from our focus upon the other. By proactive listening we invite the other to share heart to heart to the degree that he or she is ready to share. Sharing is the essence of caring in the realm of love. Daring to share by faith in love's energy makes a difference. Words are not needed to share this energy. Our presence communicates through the electromagnetic energy fields generated from the core of our beings. Our actions literally speak louder than words and can bring comfort when words fail. We can keep in mind where we are "coming from" while we focus on where the other person is and encourage sharing of emotions as well as memories and thoughts. We need not speak about where we are "coming from" unless the person asks. Gentle as doves and wise as owls, we gather with others as one way to confirm everyone's value to God. Thus we encourage others to wonder who this God is we've come to know that they may also come to know not as an "other" but as our sister or brother.

Important Reminder: Self-care includes realizing that our energy fields interact with those around us even when we are not aware of this interaction. Wisdom counsels that we be aware of our nature as interactive beings of energy. Ego trains us to identify ourselves as mainly bodies, ignore our energy-based connections and assume that they don't exist. But they do. As quantum physics reveals, everything is mysteriously interconnected. As we come to accept this mystery, we are increasingly aware of being one with God and each other. To enjoy life, we need to tune in to our energetic interactions and be aware of their effects. When we expose ourselves to people who are in pain – chronic, traumatic or both – we register and share their emotions. As a result, the other person is likely to feel comforted and hold less pain inside. The pain that a person releases can be released to God, but often it is also released to those who listen openheartedly. To not hold onto this pain, we learn to release it to God by letting it go in ego-free surrender.

"What a friend we have in Jesus  
All our sins and griefs to bear  
And what a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer"  
Joseph M. Scriven

Self-care calls for us to routinely let go of pain so as to not hold it inside. To store up pain – ours or pain shared from others – causes "compassion fatigue" or "burn out." "Co-dependency" refers to the ego's habit of taking responsibility for other people's emotions instead of allowing them to learn to take responsibility for their own. By practicing love's ABCs, we model healthy self-care (self-responsibility) while also being responsive to one another. The blended "art and science" of love's ABCs reflect the combined use of our brain's right and left hemispheres to engage our minds wholeheartedly. As we routinely allow the Spirit of love to purify our hearts, we maintain clarity of mind and release worries to the One who handles them with grace and ease. That is why our yokes are light – the light of love!

## Peace

Peace is the emotion of wholeness with the most modest level of energy. With energy akin to sorrow's modest energy, peace may seem a delicate emotion – mostly because under the ego's influence we've not learned to sustain peace of mind. We tend to drift back to sorrow and towards fear as ego again takes over. Surviving on conflict, ego justifies our upsets by elevating differences into controversy and conflict. Within ego-orientation, we easily lose peace of mind. When stirred up by external events or internal imaginings, our mind often fails to focus by grace upon peace and instead seizes up with fear that "things will never get better." It serves the ego for us to believe that strife and suffering are inevitable and unresolvable. By engrained habits our mind jumps readily to worries based on painful emotions of brokenness that have become our favorite familiar territory – despite how much we may complain.

We may even feel decreased power when we let go of the habit of being angry and accept peace as a preferred condition. When we become defenseless, we feel vulnerable, inadequately protected. Fear of vulnerability arises from past experiences that the ego uses to justify its existence. Renewal of our minds requires that we risk being vulnerable, explore peace as a viable, reliable option and discover its true nature as a strength, not a weakness. Again the issue of trust arises. Can we trust others to be as committed to peace as we want to be? Do we risk being fools by trusting? The alternative presented by the ABCs of love is the alternative of wisdom in contrast to the pattern of worldly foolishness. In the long run the ABCs of love will work for all as we join together to build the beloved community's new pattern based on God's visionary design regardless of how much resistance – passive and active – we may encounter from those who are not yet ready to put their faith where we place ours.

Jesus is called "Prince of Peace" because the peaceful kingdom is where he rules in our hearts and minds as our role model. There we can all share in the privileges of safety and strength within peace. To do so, we must learn to surrender our hearts and minds to the one we follow in complete trust that he will remain steadfastly faithful to us even as we may struggle to remain faithful to him. Just as Jesus failed to conform to the "social norms" or pattern of his culture when he walked on the earth, we too will fail to conform to the pattern of the ego's world when we participate wholeheartedly in the alternative of love. Jesus calls us to walk on Earth in our bodies as he once walked. He calls us to become aware of heaven within us so that we can share it with those who are around us as the "beloved community." MLK Jr. became aware of that alternative and began to share a vision of it that he received in communion with the Spirit of Truth and Love. After he died, he was no longer able to use his body to communicate this alternative and lead us towards it. But we can still advance along the visionary direction he pointed out in his "I Have a Dream Speech."

"Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, 'Look at us!' So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.' Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God."

Acts 3:3-8

Peace extends beyond non-violence to heal the harm caused by violence. To co-create the “beloved community,” we must extend MLK Jr.’s vision of nonviolence to follow Jesus where he calls us to go as healers. By the model of his lifestyle, Jesus leads us to become radically, wholeheartedly committed to sharing the energy of love that flows from God through us to others as Jesus taught his first disciples to do. We must move into the Relations Field beyond nonviolence at home and in political arenas to create new relationships within which healing occurs to undo the adverse effects of violence. To first do no harm is not enough. We must commit ourselves without reservation to becoming healers. The realm of peace is powerful. Peace invites healing to take place. When we share it as “two or more” of Jesus’ followers, he has promised to activate the healing power of peace wherever we are. The experience of Peter and John illustrates that power. “Look at us!” not “Look at me!” The unity within which Peter and John were walking empowered them to set healing power free to flow. Healing (physical, emotional mental, social and volitional) is more precious than financial security or any alternative the ego offers.

Peace is more than the absence of conflict. A truce is not peace. Peace is not the same as lack of differences. Peace reflects a shared commitment to resolving all differences by peaceful means characterized by forgiveness, faithfulness and friendship infused with grace. Within hearts and minds at peace, differences are not censored but celebrated as welcomed diversity of perspectives – not repressed harmfully but expressed creatively as contributions to the whole. Creating fields of peace will prove to be the remedy our hearts have long desired as we move forward together in unity while sharing our diversity. In all circumstances we can connect within our hearts with God’s peace of mind as a gift of grace to us.

## Hope

As a moderately energized emotion natural to wholeness, hope has power to lift from us the weight of heavy fears. But hope isn’t rising hot air lacking in power substance. It is as powerful as God’s will and as substantial as the air that holds aircraft aloft and upon which eagles soar. Like air, hope is invisible, reliably strong and ever present. Winds of hope sweep away pollutants of pain and bring fresh breezes of new life. Hope is an emotion that reflects the presence of love in our hearts. The “miracle of hope” amid despair reveals the power of hope. Whenever we feel hope, we sense the reality that love is present. Sensing love’s presence, we can take risks that fear (absence of awareness of love) discourages.

The nature of hope is often revealed more by its effects than by directly sensing it. Upon its first arriving, we may mistake it for a destructive force. Only after we see the opportunities it leaves in its wake may we more fully realize how it helps to create new life. When hope stirs, it may stir like a hurricane arising from a tropical depression as it invites the energy of anger, fear and sorrow to find constructive expressions. Hoped-for changes may be preceded by hope’s power to unmask and dissolve the old that resists change. We must let go of old structures that are no longer helpful to clear the way for newly designed structures of greater utility. We come to know the nature of hope indirectly by how it causes us to think, speak and act with greater courage in the face of fear. Hope is the torch that courage holds up for all to see. It is the torchlight held high by Lady Liberty even in our darkest dawn.

We can intentionally cultivate the field of hope by our faith practices. There is no one ideal practice of faith. Every believer in a benevolent God engages in some form of prayer. Our prayers may occur within our hearts, through outward expressions or both. Praying outwardly without praying inwardly rings hollow. The prayers of those who seek the kingdom of God's justice and grace with humility know prayer's transforming power. All can know that power. Practicing love's ABCs leads you to pray in your own way as you seek inward communion with the Source of Love and Creator of Life. God welcomes us to experience ourselves fully in intimacy with God and then share with others what we discover there about ourselves. God will honor our hope of being empowered by God.

"Our God, our help in ages past,  
our hope for years to come,  
our shelter from the stormy blast,  
and our eternal home."

Isaac Watts

(*Oh, God Our Help in Ages in Past*)

It may seem selfish to seek empowerment by God as if doing so implies that others cannot have the same power. That sense of selfishness arises from the ego's competitive/comparative orientation by which some may have extreme favor only if most do not have much or any at all. It is another manifestation of "haves" vs "have-nots" or social class disparity. We call that "favoritism." It is another "ism" the ego institutionalizes as "normal" and by which it falsely represents life as a game of comparison and competition among "winners" and "losers" (or to ego "whiners.") Once we experience being one of God's empowered children, we realize that there is more than enough room in the Divine Heart for all of us to experience all the power and favor our hearts could ever desire. With our hearts fully satisfied, we no longer want to play by ego's competitive rules. The favor God guarantees us cannot be given to anyone else. We need not compete for it. It is ours by divine inheritance while God yet lives. So too is the favor God offers everyone! God invites all of us into the Divine Winner's Circle.

"Hope springs eternal" because it springs from God, from what Jesus knew as the "wellspring of living water" within each of us. When we set time aside to practice our chosen form of meditation and enter into communion with the Presence of God within us, we start out sipping from the oasis within us even while living in the desert of the world around us. We only sip because like anyone who becomes desperately thirsty while wandering in the desert, we cannot gulp down water without becoming ill. We must at first only sip. In time, we will become accustomed to having water in our system again and be able to drink to satisfy our deepest thirsts for truth and love. Then we will discover that we are sitting not at a small oasis but alongside a river abundant with water and teeming with life. We find the inner eternal wellspring of hope when we rediscover and reactivate our **Authenticity** within the **Bonds of Cooperation** we allow to embrace, reassure and heal us. As we cultivate our true nature, we gain power to invite others to come to the water too. Just as "you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink," you can lead a fellow desert traveler to the oasis but you cannot force him or her to drink of the water of life. Let the weary wanderer sit on the bank and put a toe in the water. In time the desire to be fully immersed will come upon the wanderer as the presence of abundance reassures that there is plenty for all and that he or she, like all loved ones, is welcome "just as I am" in love's hospitality and grace.

## Joy

On our journey around the HEM, we arrive at joy. Here we find another high energy emotion, this time associated with wholeness. In joy, we celebrate life and our capacity to live holistically with utter hospitality for all who may come our way. We are gaining confidence in being and sharing who we are, no longer hiding in fear as ego trained us. Sips of joy heighten our enthusiasm. More intense doses of joy flow into us as if intoxicating. Joy is one of life's natural highs. Scientists associate joy with certain chemicals produced by our bodies but joy is not caused by chemicals. The presence of joy within our hearts causes our body to produce chemical responses. Sometimes I find it helpful to think of joy as the same high-level energy I've felt as anger. Anger may be bottled up joy. When we have no way to feel and express life's joys and yet know that joy is possible, we may feel intensely frustrated. Habits of bottling up joy can cause stress that feels like sweet wine turning into sour vinegar. Within the orderliness the HEM offers, we can sort out confusing emotions and even re-sweeten soured grapes.

The ego toys with joy as if to use it for its purposes instead of allowing it to be its own nature. For example, if someone operating out of ego wants to control us, that person can identify joy as a reward and withhold or thwart our joy as a form of punishment. That person may dole out opportunities for us to enjoy ourselves as rewards and may take away our favorite opportunities for joy as punishment for not conforming to his or her expectations. When I think of joy in this way, I realize that under the ego's training I learned to hide from my own joy so that I did not let others know about it and then use it to control me by using what I enjoyed as tokens in their schemes of reward and punishment. In time, I adjusted to not feeling joy as if not feeling it protected me from losing it. It's strange how the ego trains us to relate to our emotions so unwisely and learn to impose loss of peace, hope and joy upon ourselves!

As I explored opportunities to serve others for God's purposes and not for ego's purposes of gaining power or indulging in self-gratification, I came to experience the joy Jesus has in mind as the reward for faithful service. This is the heights of joy. True joy contrasts with the counterfeit pseudo-joy that ego generates called "pride." It's important that we distinguish accurately between "pride" and "joy" and not mistake the counterfeit for the real thing. Pride is not an emotion. It is a state of mind promoted by the ego to keep the ego in place as our preferred pattern of thinking about life, judging our experiences and managing our relationships. Joy arises in our hearts and then floods our minds with the divine love that casts out all fear and empowers us to accept transfer of our minds from ego's dominion to Spirit's dominion. For me, the pathway to greatest joy has been through service to others as I learned how God wanted others served. My path ventured along steps of responsibility for little that I might graduate to receive opportunities to exercise responsibility for more. At times along such a path, one may feel unworthy to be entrusted with responsibility and yet by faith rise to each occasion with God's aid. Faith is a pathway to doing justice on God's terms and to knowing the heights of joy. It is also a pathway to increasing self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-appreciation.

"Well done, good and faithful servant. . . . Enter into the joy of your master."  
Matthew 25:21 (ESV)

The shallows of joy include happiness. To wade into joy's ocean towards deeper satisfaction and encounters with richer joy, we must be wise not to mistake being happy over trivial conveniences or other outcomes that make us feel "special" as encounters with joy. Yes, God does want us to be happy. But let's not mistake God as a power enshrined in our sand castle to make us feel special but not to make others feel as special. Comparative specialness is an ego-orientation. God takes no sides in our ego's efforts to establish how "more special" we are. In God's eyes, everyone is special, none more or less than others. To counter the ego's effects on the content of our character and its ability to undermine our authenticity and integrity, we must be alert to habits by which we seek exceptional specialness.

We risk allowing pride to substitute for joy when we fail to serve others and instead primarily serve ourselves. Self-serving schemes may seem ingenious and even prove successful for a time, but eventually they fail us. They are not truly self-serving because they fail to serve the authentic "us" in love's realm and only serve our egos temporarily in fear's realm. When we encounter genuine joy, our memories of it last forever. In contrast, memories of pride soon wear thin beneath the grind of having to perform again and again to avoid feeling ashamed. Futility in endlessly performing to promote our pride in greater and greater achievements is not what Jesus had in mind when he told the parable of the faithful servant who was given more responsibilities with corresponding joy, not glory or even social admiration.

### *Our Incomplete Exploration of the Healthy Emotions Map*

Our exploration of the HEM is never over. The HEM is a tool to help us to explore the wide world of spirits, a world of unforeseeable magnificence and marvelous mysteries. We're wise not to mistake this world as one to be conquered and exploited as Europeans once conquered and exploited what they called the New World. They declared the "New" World unoccupied and free to be taken for whatever purpose for which each wanted a piece of it. The explorers, pioneers and settlers divided the New World and exploited it for their own purposes. They were mistaken to view it as unoccupied or ripe for exploitation. Let's not make the same mistake as we explore emotions as renewed territory. This territory is already occupied by our authentic selves. We exploit it only at our own expense. We are natives to the field of emotions who have forgotten parts of ourselves who once roamed free there as healthier, whole people. As we heal our heartaches, we will remember our native citizenship there. And we will realize how much we want to let go of ego's habits of exploitation and allow a new pattern to replace the ego's pattern so that we co-create the New World together as its natural co-inhabitants.

### **Possible wonderings to stimulate thought and dialogue**

As you study the HEM, it is helpful to share memories of how you've experienced emotions and relevant pathways. It is also helpful to share emotions you have currently while in your group. When you feel ready, talk about your memories or current emotions to see how those you share cause others to share theirs too. To take the ABCs of love to heart, build trust by sharing heart to heart. One way to share is to write a brief account of an experience privately and then offer it anonymously for the group to talk about.

## Core Life Orientations Wheel (Refer to Toolkit Illustration 4)

Having explored the WA's Emotions Field with the aid of the HEM, let's revisit the entire WA to look at it from another perspective. Illustration 4 in the Toolkit is a chart on which WA Fields appear in association with Core Orientations towards life.

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal."

Paul – 1 Corinthians 13:1 (NIV)

While each orientation has unique qualities, together they present an all-encompassing orientation towards all life. This illustrates the principle of wholeness that all parts interact holistically to create more than the sum of the parts. The interactive dynamics of wholeness bring the parts alive. In dynamic interplay, love is free to share itself. We live holistically to avoid clanging about like cans of loose nuts and bolts. The ego coaches us to live like Frankenstein's awkward monster to cause others to fear us. That's not how God designed us. We grow best by living according to God's design, not ego's.

Cultivating the Core Orientations displayed on the chart frees us to grow by God's design. As we do so, we express the likeness of God because the Core Orientations are qualities of God's nature. Creativity, Commitment, Curiosity, Courage, Cooperation and Compassion are also the High C's of Childhood. When Jesus said we have to become more like children to enter the kingdom of God, he had these qualities in mind. With a little prompting from me, I invite you to share your own ideas and feelings about the full meaning, purpose and direction of these orientations. Let your study group unpack the qualities of courage, cooperation and compassion with commitment to creatively explore all with judgment-free curiosity. Share with open minds and hearts to comprehend the Core Orientations and how God and ego differ in relating to them.

- How do you feel about the expression of each core orientation in your own life?
- Share stories about how you've experienced each or may yet hope to experience each.

### Creativity

The Spirit's Creativity expressed through wholeness is always loving in its purpose, process and outcome. It gives birth to diversity and enlivens traditions at their cutting-edge. Like a wedding, it may include "something old, something new . . . something blue." It's not limited to the arts. Scientists can approach a problem creatively in experiments they design. Creative solutions to social and business issues are available as options. In what ways are you creative and/or want to be (more) creative?

"When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God."

Genesis 5:1 (NET Bible)

### Commitment

By Commitment, Will focuses on selected goals or purposes while remaining flexible and resilient about developing ways to fulfill them. How do creativity and commitment work together? Do you see the possibility of tension between the two? Might any tension open up space for significant developments? What examples of flexibility and resilience do you recall from the wholehearted commitments you have made in your own life or observed in the lives of others?

"If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, . . . commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only."

1 Samuel 7:3 (NIV)

## *Curiosity*

Curiosity is our mind's natural motive to expand and grow. What role has curiosity played in your life? Has it ever caused trouble or brought a surprising discovery? How do you feel about that? Have you ever been discouraged from being curious? Does humility play a part? What is the relationship between curiosity and judgmental attitudes? If curiosity reaches out like a monkey's tail, how does "comprehension" relate to this dynamic? In a world awash with ever-changing novelty, new distractions and expanding information, what are the risks of curiosity? How might the ego use our curiosity for its own purposes?

"For there will be a time when people will not tolerate sound teaching. Instead, following their own desires, they will accumulate teachers for themselves, because they have an insatiable curiosity to hear new things."

2 Timothy 4:3 (NET Bible)

## *Courage*

To live in the body amid a wide range of risks takes courage. Where does courage come from? How might you tell the difference between wise and unwise uses of courage? How has courage appeared in your life? How do you expect that life may ask more courage of you? Does courage grow? If so how? What does having experiences have to do with courage? How does courage interact with curiosity?

"But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'"

Matthew 14:27 (NIV)

## *Cooperation*

Cooperation involves working together towards shared goals. How does cooperation differ from competition and conflict? Does cooperation ever encounter either? How does diversity challenge cooperation? Are some types of diversity more challenging than others? Why? How has cooperation shown its value in your life? What impact do fear, pride and shame have on cooperation?

"Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we become coworkers in cooperation with the truth."

3 John 1:8 (NET Bible)

## *Compassion*

Compassion is our heart's natural orientation towards others and ourselves when ego doesn't limit us. What does it mean to you? How does it differ from sympathy or pity? What is its role in life? How might compassion change how you treat others? How do fear, pride and shame relate to it? How does guilt relate to it? When may it feel difficult to be compassionate? Can you share an example of how compassion showed up in your life? How was Jesus affected by compassion?

"Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him."

Matthew 20:34 (NASB)

## *Unifying Life Orientation*

To you, what is life's unifying orientation or theme that brings it all together for a life worth living? Is it one key core orientation, a blend of two or more or a quality of life that is beyond the high C's? Might your response change during your life? What do you understand Jesus to have said about the main theme or orientation of life as he asks us to live it? As you consider Jesus' life, how do the meanings of "shalom" blend together as one? What do you find on the Internet about the most comprehensive meaning of "shalom"?

"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NSV)

## **B is for Bonding – The Flow of Love as Bonding Energy (Refer to Toolkit Illustration 5)**

Illustration 5 in the Toolkit depicts the bonding power of love in a way we've not yet discussed. Helpful ideas can be discovered and explored by using the WA to illustrate them. Many ideas can be put into words and still not be communicated well, especially holistic ideas that involve emotions. It's helpful to use illustrations to communicate holistically – using all aspects of our brains capacity to process ideas. Our brain's left hemisphere tends to process words and pieces of the puzzle while our brain's right hemisphere processes overall patterns and designs – "connecting the dots" to see the "big picture." Practice using both hemispheres of your brain by *envisioning* how pieces fit and flow dynamically within patterns, *imagining* more possibilities and *allowing your heart's desires* to motivate your thinking to expand. What if your heart's desire reflects ancient wisdom to integrate into modern lifestyles of love? Please do not allow habits of discounting your value or the value of your ideas and emotions, or being afraid to be "wrong," silence you. Dare to share as your way to care. That's an important way to practice the ABCs of love within your group. Perhaps your contributions will promote further discussion and trigger insights and understandings that would be overlooked if you remain silent.

The figure-8 loop shown in Illustration 5 is the "love-nurturing loop" mentioned on page 3. Here we explore the idea of a feedback loop. Nature uses feedback loops to foster and sustain life. Typically a feedback loop is characterized as "positive" or "negative" by its effect. Yet its overall function is to manage tension amid change to sustain balance. All feedback loops manage energy of some kind to sustain balance within dynamics. Information feedback loops function in this way. For example, our inner ear registers movement to allow us to keep our balance even when we engage in rapid movement. Our sense of balance allows us to maintain our upright orientation even while other senses may be temporarily overwhelmed by fast motion. The inner ear feeds back stabilizing information to our brain.

The "love-nurturing loop" functions in a similar way. The ego trains us to not use it. Wisdom counsels that we intentionally retrain ourselves to tune into this feedback loop and use it to cultivate healthy relationships within our Relationship Fields to form bonds of trust with those who likewise desire to share trust. This feedback loop helps us to keep our balance within relationships of all kinds. What does Illustration 5 reveal about how love flows from its origin within the Will of God through us when we align our wills with God's will? Wisdom counsels that we remind ourselves regularly, "Thy will not mine be done." That does not require us to submit to unhealthy relationships as our regular social diet, especially within our homes. We need our homes to be havens of rest, recovery and character development after exposures to the "pattern" of the ego. However, if we are to serve as healers in the world and co-create a healthy world that flows evermore freely with love, God will call us to encounter those in need of greater health. We might call those folks "dysfunctional" but in truth they are people in pain who need to become aware of their opportunity to rise free of the suffering their egos preserve. When we relate with them according to our love-nurturing loop, we radiate the energy of love for them to experience and consider as an alternative to their current state of fear.

Use Illustration 5 to stimulate discussions within your group. Recall examples from your own life of times when you tried to share love. Share them with your group to the extent you desire to do so. Some examples you may feel safer to share than others. Share what you feel safe to share. The point is to prime the pump for discussion about “things that matter” to our hearts – especially issues related to feeling connected, developing trust and how love might be shared. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers, only lessons from which insights, understanding and wisdom can be gained.

Possible starter questions to wonder and talk about:

- What’s a honeymoon period? What periods follow next? How does love help to sustain relationships?
- When did you feel hopeful about a relationship? How did you grow by allowing yourself to hope?
- What habits or practices work well to help you keep your will aligned with God’s in all conditions?
- How does the love-nurturing loop help you to gain self-understanding from your experiences?
- Does the path of the love-nurturing form a symbol that may be significant?
- Have you ever explored a “rocky” or challenging relationship that turned into a bonding experience?

Our capacity to bond with others depends upon our emerging beyond ego as authentic, whole persons. Through bonding we connect in all of our relationships, especially those with the greatest potential for heart-to-heart intimacy. The Intimacy Zone of our lives’ I-Zones will not feel deeply satisfying if we fail to allow love to connect us openly and honestly with others. The ego’s agenda of separation and independence resists love’s way of forming bonds of unity. Perhaps it will help to imagine that the ego coats us with a nonstick, hard shell like the way polyurethane coats wood to protect it. If you want to glue pieces of wood together that have been coated with polyurethane, you first need to roughen up the smooth finish to make it textured enough to form bonds with the glue. If you don’t prepare the surfaces before gluing them, the joint is likely to pop apart easily when stressed. Ego-protected people also pop apart easily when their relationships come under stress.

“Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”  
Colossians 3:14

To use a different metaphor, imagine that you want to join two pieces of metal together. You could solder them and create a bond to hold them together, but a bond made of solder is not as strong as one created by welding the pieces together. In soldering, hot solder flows to fill the gap between the two pieces and bonds to both pieces. When the solder cools it remains between the two pieces as a kind of “glue.” In contrast, welding heats up both pieces of metal and creates a bond made of molecules that flow from each piece. The bond between the pieces can be as strong as the metal itself. In short, the two pieces have become one piece due to the heat applied during welding. When a relationship heats up it is possible for bonds of love to form if the heat does not become destructive to parties in the relationship.

People who form lasting relationships discover that they need to set aside their egos and allow love to reach deeper than their egos allow. Without advocating for unnecessary roughness or heat in relationships, I believe that rough patches within a relationship can be bonding experiences when they are accepted as occasions for exercising forgiveness, faith and fellowship as well as grief and gratitude.

## **C is for Cooperation – Restoring Life’s Cycle of Love (Refer to Toolkit Illustration 6)**

At the beginning this dialogue, we focused on the A in the ABCs of love as we explored Authenticity with the tools of I-Zones, Wholeness Archetype, Healthy Emotions Map and Core Life Orientations. Next we looked at the B that stands for Bonding with the aid of Illustration 5. We invested much time in Authenticity upfront because it is the foundation for all the rest of love’s alphabet. We cannot form lasting bonds of love unless we engage with each other as authentic whole persons who value integrity as a highest priority and intentionally develop our character strengths with humility. Love always waits as life’s divine potential but it waits patiently for us to align our wills with God’s will so that the spiritual beings we become free to know and express can receive and share the power of love.

Bonds of love form within and are expressed through the process of Cooperation. That’s the C in the ABCs of love. Although one person can “operate” alone, it takes two or more to “co-operate” together. Bonding and Cooperation are symbiotic. Our development of one promotes development of the other. The love-nurturing loop not only channels love into our relationships to create bonds. It also provides feedback to let us know how well we’re doing in forming bonds of love that result in and are sustained by cooperation. Emotional feedback tells us whether a person to whom we’re reaching out is responding positively to our outreach.

Cooperation involves two or more people aligning our wills with each other to concentrate our investment of energy on producing outcomes and achieving goals we share. Cooperation prevents energy from being diverted wastefully into competition that thwarts achievement of love’s goals. Resistance is a common term for non-cooperation. It’s helpful to keep alert for signs of resistance building up in a relationship. Love can overcome resistance only if both (or all) participants in a relationship commit to overcoming it by practicing love and encouraging each other to grow free of ego. Resistance is likely to arise, perhaps inevitably will arise, as we transition from an ego-oriented, fear-based culture into the spirit-oriented, love-based alternative fostered by practicing the ABCs of love. Ego-training causes the resistance we encounter. Commitment to setting aside ego-trained habits and patterns opens the path to discovering how to overcome resistance and allow the flow of love to circulate with increasing freedom.

The flow of love through the love-nurturing loop is like the flow of electricity through a wire. In Illustration 5, there are sparks of energy shown within the Will Field and the Relations Field. These sparks symbolize the energy of love. When electrical energy flows through a wire, the material of the wire introduces resistance to the flow. If the wire is made of a material that conducts electricity along the wire with low resistance, more of the energy passes along the wire and is available to do the work of lighting a bulb, running an engine or computer, etc. If the material of the wire offers high resistance, the wire heats up and energy is wasted in producing heat instead of performing the intended task. Since copper offers more resistance than gold, gold is a “better conductor” than copper. Superconductors offer little resistance so that little energy is lost in the flow of the electricity. Hearts as pure as gold empower us with love. Our goal as authentic people is to be superconductors of love with all its healing results!

In the love-nurturing loop, ego's fears offer high resistance to the flow of love's energy. Fear's resistance causes us to feel the heat generated as frustration when things do not turn out as we hoped. Since the ego prefers competition over cooperation, it resists cooperation and looks for excuses to produce and justify competition. Using the tools of the ABCs of love empowers us to reduce the resistance to love's flow by removing the ego from its role as our relationship manager. As we learn to align our will with God's we allow God's Spirit to become our relationship manager and invite Jesus to show us the wisdom of our heart to cooperate with God and with those with whom we relate. Under Spirit's management, our relationships take on deeper meaning and bear sweeter, more nourishing fruit.

Love is liberating. It liberates us from the ego's seduction-baited traps and reveals the ego's incompetence as a relationship manager. Cooperation as love defines it requires that we apply all insights we gain by using the ABCs of love within our relationships and grow in understanding as we apply them. Every relationship can become a growing experience in co-creating the culture of love – heaven on earth on divine, eternal terms.

#### *Transition from Cycle of Mutual Violence/Violation to Cycle of Mutual Appreciation*

Illustration 6 in the Toolkit depicts a transitional cycle for relationships. It shows a cyclical pattern typical of violent relationships along with its potential to gradually convert into a cycle of mutual appreciation when insertions of love's energy defuse violence and transform violations into validations. This process of transition works to transform a relationship if both (or all) participants in the relationship desire that the relationship no longer express violence but instead express mutual appreciation. Otherwise, the process depicted in Illustration 6 shows how one person can cope with a relationship in which another person still functions by ego-training. For example, if parents separate on account of violence, they may continue to relate to each other as co-parents. Or if siblings do not simultaneously seek to transform their ego-oriented familial relationship to one based on love, one sibling can use the guidance of Illustration 6 to learn to relate to the other sibling(s) in healthier ways. This guidance also applies between a parent and a child when one seeks to transition to love's healthier orientation while the other resists that transition. It applies to relationships outside the family too. Nothing about Illustration 6 requires that a person remain in an abusive or unhealthy relationship as if trapped with no alternative. Illustration 6 can be used to open a pathway for leaving such a relationship entirely. In light of God's gift of free will to each of us, we cannot insist on anyone's joining in our quest for healthier relationships. Each must choose by free will.

Love's transitional cycle is an open energy cycle in contrast to the closed energy cycle of violence. A cycle of violence suffocates its participants in negative emotional energy communicated as messages that violate integrity and convey disrespect. A transitional cycle opens up windows for truth's reviving breezes to enter in at each stage of the cycle. As oxygen is essential to our brain's health and vitality so truth is essential to our emotional and mental health and vitality.

As you use this cycle to attempt to transform a relationship of violence into one of mutual appreciation, be sure to establish outside support systems as reference points for your efforts. Alone you

cannot see through the fog of emotional confusion that violence generates. You must have opportunities to step away from the relationship to see clearly what's going on within the relationship and make decisions concerning how you will or will not continue to attempt the transition your heart desires. Sometimes clarity reveals the wisdom to remove yourself from a relationship entirely (temporarily or permanently) or at least as much as you can while managing your responsibilities to children or other loved ones. When done on love's terms, letting go is an act of love, not an act of abandonment.

### ***Violence = Dishonesty = Violation of Integrity and Authenticity***

To clarify that violence is not limited to physical forms of violence, I define violence as any “violation of integrity and authenticity”. All failures to honor truth are forms of violence. Conversely, all forms of violence can be traced back to ego's lack of faithfulness to and manipulation of truth. The ego plays games with truth and violence results from its games. Violence includes emotional violations as well as other violations of wholeness. Neglect is a mild form of violence. Use the WA to assess how healthy a relationship is for you by checking for violations. Especially check all fields for signs of patterns of violation – be they passive (neglect, indifference, omission) or active.

*Spirit Field:* Does the other participant in your relationship objectify you as if you are primarily a body lacking in a tender heart and love-worthy soul? How free are you to cultivate the spiritual field of your wholeness without feeling guilty, ashamed or punished because of your investment? Do you feel pressure to abandon adequate attention to this field? If so, where is that pressure coming from and how can you respond to it effectively? Do you feel accepted or even supported and validated when you talk openly with the others about this field and your desire to cultivate it?

*Will Field:* Does the other participant in your relationship try to control you so as to generate power struggles? Why is he or she doing that? Does this power struggle mean that the other person disregards your free will and tries to prevent you from investing your will on behalf of your own best interests or the best interests of others? Since power struggles are habitual within ego-based relationships, seek opportunities to talk about alternatives to the futility of constant struggles. Does the other participant in your relationship honor your desire to align your will with God's will? Does he or she also seek to do the same? How willing is the other participant to consider other resources or processes by which to invite more wisdom into your relationship? What might those other resources or processes be?

*Mind Field:* Do you feel respected for your capacity to think and the way you approach decision-making? Does the other participant in your relationship send overt or covert messages that indicate his or her feelings of superiority or inferiority as a competent thinker? Do you have adequate support for your sanity? Are both/all relationship participants open-minded in their quest for common ground?

*Body Field:* Do you endure physical harm to remain within a relationship? Look at more than overt blows or bodily injuries. Stress symptoms (weight change, sleeplessness, illness, tics, etc.) may be signs of violations. Are you free to rest, exercise, eat and attend to your physical health as you need to?

*Relation Field:* How does your relationship affect other relationships? Are you free to explore other friendships and develop interests beyond this one relationship? Do you feel isolated within one relationship? How controlling do you feel you need to be to feel safe? How deeply satisfied do you feel?

*Emotional Field:* Are you free to share your heart without risk of being made to feel small because you trust? Do you experience being validated when you share your emotions honestly in caring ways? Are emotions a topic that each participant talks about openly or are emotions treated as unwelcome or avoided? Do you feel tempted to manipulate the other person by using your emotions selectively or in exaggerated ways? Do you feel manipulated by the other person's use of emotions?

It's not possible to list all questions for assessing your relationship's qualities. If you suspect that a relationship is not healthy for you in anyway, find someone to consult to help you evaluate what's going on. Trust your own intuition or "gut" to guide you to seek help you need. Of course, to trust intuition requires that we listen inwardly to sense gentle nudges we may have learned under ego-training to ignore. Use the ABCs of love and its Toolkit to start and continue on a journey of gradually increasing self-awareness, self-understanding and self-appreciation. The goal is to restore or perhaps for the first time generate a flow of love into and within you as well as throughout your relationships. In being cooperative with love within your relationships cooperate with your heart by heeding its guidance. Keep in mind the essential rules of healthy relationships: *Trust, Feel and Talk with someone about all things that matter.*

After spending a few or more years violating these health rules while pretending to get along as best you can in disguise as an ego, it will understandably feel risky to "switch horses in mid-stream." That feeling is an example of how common sayings or beliefs do not always align with God's wisdom. Ancient wisdom is not necessarily common these days. Be patient with yourself as you cooperate with the new approach to life that the ABCs of love offer as our alternative to fear and ego. Perhaps you'll find it best for you to switch horses in mid-stream or perhaps you'll find it works best to ride to the other side of the stream before changing horses. To cite another bit of common wisdom, perhaps you'll want to get right back on a horse from which you've fallen off or perhaps you'll want to ride a different horse or learn to ride better on a trained horse before trying a less tame one. There are often a wider range of options than the ego permits you to realize. Fear narrows our field of vision. Love widens it. When you seek to cooperate with love, seek a wider, clearer, more farsighted vision to guide your quest for options.

It is also wise to keep in mind that the ego in others may misinterpret your offer to cooperate as an offer to be easily used and taken advantage of. Remain alert to signs of being used or taken advantage of as you experiment with Cooperation as your C note. It's appropriate to speak directly to the issue of misinterpretations of cooperation and let others know what you mean by cooperation. Set out the key points for your definition of cooperation by clarifying what it does not include. Sometimes I imagine these key points to be like stakes used to set up a tent. Before I try to stretch a tent to its standing position, I stake out the floor at its corners and along its edges. Think of the tent's floor as your definition of the meaning of cooperation. Stake it out before you raise the tent of a relationship and invite anyone to

enter into a tent with you. If the relationship turns out to be healthy for you, it will be “our” tent. Over time as you become more confident in your use of the ABCs of love, you may change the nature of the tent and redefine its boundaries. But, it’s OK to start with a single-person pup tent for your relationship with yourself and move to a shared tent as your camping mastery grows. Most of us need to become reacquainted with our authentic selves before we even try out camping with others.

### *Exploring the Mutual Violation → Transition → Mutual Appreciation Cycles*

Cycles of mutual violation, transition and mutual appreciation are patterns of relationships. The ego’s pattern of relationships is rooted in the cycle of mutual violation. It is a key feature of the “pattern of the world” Paul counseled that we not conform to. Cycles of mutual violation may vary in their details but all express the primary pattern. Variations of the violation cycle begin as repetitions of past relationships within which we learned to assume that the ego is our only choice as a relationship manager and that all relationships are ultimately power struggles – not opportunities to share power but opportunities to acquire, augment and amass power out of fear of feeling powerless. In the context of the ego’s conditional fake-love, relationships between parents and children are often training grounds for how to exercise power when someone else wants to control your choices. Teaching how to cope with influences outside of us (in our “Universe Outside”) while ignoring inner guidance is a major goal of the ego. Most parents are unaware of how relationships in which they participated or witnessed in their past shape their relationships with their children and parenting partners. Since only truth will set us free from the ego’s patterns of our past and allow us to create healthier relationships now, we cannot avoid talking about the truth, even when it may cause us and/or others to feel negative emotions we’d prefer not to feel.

As we use a cycle of transition to convert any relationship from one of mutual violation to one of mutual appreciation (or enter into a new relationship as one of mutual appreciation from the start), we will feel emotions. It is vital to process our emotions according to understanding we gain from using the HEM and not allow old habits regarding emotions to distort a mutual appreciation cycle. A mutual appreciation cycle is based on honesty. At first we may not know how to identify and share our emotions honestly without feeling as if we are uncaring or violating another person. Let’s be honest about how awkward it can feel to work on changing our approach to relationships. Truth scares our ego but it is sacred to our wholehearted wholeness. Keeping emotional balance as we move forward is a challenge.

Within its four major boxes, Illustration 6 describes the four stages of a typical cycle of violation. Arced arrows link these squares in a clockwise pattern to show the closed system that maintains violations as the norm. This is the ego’s pattern of relationships – even the mildest forms that rarely display overt violations but are infused with tensions to which participants have adjusted as “normal.” The ego’s relationships do not often start out with signs of violation. They typically start out in a “honeymoon phase” that draws participants into the relationship as their “ideal.” To grow in self-awareness includes examining relationship ideals and understanding how we came to form our ideals as we were socialized to belong within families and communities. It often happens that we become involved in relationships that

fail to satisfy our highest ideals. To grow in self-awareness and self-acceptance as needed to decide whether – and if so how – to remain within such relationships empowers love to replace fear.

The ego's agenda for relationships includes overcoming loneliness but not on healthy terms. Its alternative to loneliness is "specialness." The ego typically aims for establishing relationships within which each participant makes the other feel "special" or favored. For example, a parent typically seeks to make his or her first child feel special, as if the parent's permanent favorite. A teacher or coach may seek to establish specialness with a student or player. An employer may favor some employees over others. Other examples abound. The feelings of being special to each other grow. It is hard to resist wanting to favor someone who matches our ideals and falls readily into line with our hopes and expectations. For the less mature, it seems natural to want to enjoy the favor of an authority figure. For authority figures, it is gratifying to have loyal, admiring followers.

In this way, first-born children and favored students, players, employees, etc. form habits of compliance to remain "special" or "favored." The egos of parents, teachers, coaches, pastors and other authority figures may be flattered by the loyalty of followers and then feel let down when their followers outgrow their need for that authority figure and seek to move on according to their natural progress. The same dynamic may occur within romantic relationships as compliance gradually replaces free will while individually more creative and independent thinking is devalued. When the honeymoon phase is over, participants in such relationships need to make important decisions about whether to move forward together or go separate ways. Wisdom counsels that both/all grow in understanding of relationship patterns and master the art of letting go. Lifelong relationships are healthy when all participants encourage each other to be dependent upon God as their shared Supreme Source of Nurture.

Compliance is not necessarily unhealthy. The main issue is motive. What motivates a person to go along with or comply with other person's agenda? Is the main motive fear or love? When God serves us as an authority figure, we can trust that love motivates God to nurture us into holistic expressions of the divine design in which God created us. That's what the WA symbolizes as a universal design. It's the pattern of our developmental destiny as unique expressions of God's universal nature. The key to selecting healthy relationships within which to align our will and invest our trust is the same motivation. Does this relationship with another person nurture us in developing our wholeness? Does it challenge us to grow in stature and wisdom in the eyes of God and people as Jesus did or does it have another agenda? For some relationships, the answer may start out being "Yes" and eventually change to "No longer" as we outgrow it. Relationships based on cycles of violation have the opposite agenda from ones based on the cycles of mutual appreciation. It is wise to learn how to distinguish one agenda from the other. Whom do we trust to care for us a God cares for us? This is a question to keep in mind all of our lives!

### Acting-Out Stage of Violence

At the top of Illustration 6 is the "Acting-Out Stage of Violence." Does the description of this stage remind you of any relationship in your life? Think of a relationship in which you have felt less than

fully respected. We need not limit our thinking to relationships in which outright violence in words and/or deeds takes place. Subtle expressions of disrespect are enough. Has anyone used force or threat of force or loss of privileges to make you do or stop doing something? Can you see how, without necessarily intending it, a person can relate to you in a way that trains you to accept such messages and reactions as “normal” and unavoidably part of every relationship with someone you want in your life? Wisdom counsels that we become fully aware of such dynamics within our relationships to avoid being unwittingly manipulated by them or using them to manipulate others to agree and go along with us.

A person may or may not be aware of how he or she helps to share in a relationship of mutual violation (mutual manipulation). In most relationships, our ego-trained habits/patterns operate below the level of our conscious awareness. One purpose of Illustration 6 is to make us more aware of how we relate to one another so that we can “be transformed by renewal of our minds” to enjoy relationships based on the ABCs of love. Within the dynamics of love’s flow, all are set free. None are manipulated into ignoring their free will and conforming merely to gain social approval or any other of ego’s rewards.

To be transformed, we need to engage in relationships that are transformational. We need them to encourage us to pass through stages of transformation or growth. Otherwise we feel stuck – either alone in our futile efforts because we have no one with whom to practice new relationships ideas and skills or dragged down within ego’s unhealthy relationships into old patterns beyond which we desire to rise. The beloved community is composed of interlocking cycles of mutual appreciation about which I write more in the Epilogue. The purpose of the transition cycle is not to place guilt and blame on anyone for how cycles of violation passed along one generation to the next as standard or “normal” patterns for relationships. As with all tools in the Toolkit, this tool sets us free from pride, shame, guilt and blame so that we may co-create progressively healthier experiences for all of us.

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in union with the Messiah Jesus.” Paul – Romans 8:1 (ISV)

The point is to promote our progress as in “works in progress.” The cycle of transition is a process for making progress. A cycle of violation (violence) moves through four basic stages without making any progress except as violations may escalate. Escalation of violations is not what progress means. Progress is measured by gradual reduction in violations and increase in mutual appreciation.

It is admittedly controversial to say that cycles of violation involve mutual violation instead of saying that they involve one person doing violence to another as if one is always the victimizer and the other always the victim. I encourage that we openly explore this controversy through a dialogue about the possibility that “victimizer” and “victim” are interchangeable roles played out in the ego’s drama within cycles of violation and that participants in violence share these roles as they allow the ego to cause both of them to be the ego’s victims. To say that is not to absolve anyone from taking personal responsibility for how he or she allows the ego to rule within relationships as a lousy relationship manager. We each are responsible for committing our will to align with the relationship manager

“Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”  
Jesus – John 8:7 (NIV)

we choose as the supreme authority figure to rule our lives – the ego or God. Yet, compassion as Jesus expressed it requires that we admit that we all were trained to some degree to align with the ego to rule our relationships and to compete for power rather than share power as God would have us share.

To share the greatest power in the Universe is to share divine love – God's Presence – and encourage each other to feel that Presence within us in the context of peace, hope and joy. Within the arc of grief shown in the HEM's lower half, our hearts become aware of love's energy flowing into and through us. Within the arc of gratitude in the upper half, our hearts are open to the Presence more continuously. This is one way of identifying the full-circle “arc of the new covenant” – the rainbow of hope that appears after a flood of violence threatens to destroy our lives with the ego's wrath. At first we may see only part of the circle as an arc, but it is all there even when not yet visible. This circle of life is infused with God's grace for us to share too.

In the cycle of violation, the next stages follow in an endless cycle of escalating violations as one episode of hope, disappointment and resignation to futility follows another. This is the trap of the cycle of violation that the ego promotes. The alternative of the cycle of transition is depicted in Illustration 6 with pairs of energized arrows that create feedback loops for each stage of the cycle of violation. Each feedback loop opens the close system of violence to the transformative inflow of truth. There feedback loops release the building pressure of negative energy and allow in the relief of positive energy. They are Illustration 6's way of depicting the function of Illustration 5's love-nurturing feedback loop. By our commitment to love one another as Jesus loves us, we receive the empowering serenity of God within us to exercise wisdom and courage in deciding how to relate to ourselves and one another. Remember always that Jesus calls us not to the crucifixion but instead to resurrection and new life! Love calls us to step from the dark, entombing cycles of mutual violation into the light of cycles of mutual appreciation.

### Excuse-Making Stage of Violence

In this stage, the ego crafts a cover story for the acting-out stage of violations. Participants in the unhealthy relationship fail to take responsibility for the part each plays in perpetuating the cycle. Rather than to see and acknowledge the cyclical pattern of their relationship, they convince themselves that any violations do not represent the true nature of their relationship. They tell their cover story to themselves and anyone else they may need to convince that “things are OK.” This stage offers an opportunity to respond to the episode of violations/violence by releasing negative energy and receiving positive energy only if one or both participants choose to use the Toolkit's tools appropriately and no longer allow their egos to deceive them into taking no effective steps to engage in the transition cycle's relief valves.

"This is the symbol of the covenant that I've established between me and everything that lives on the earth."

Genesis 9:17

"God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time; enjoying one  
moment at a time; accepting hardships  
as the pathway to peace; taking, as  
Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not  
as I would have it; trusting that He will  
make all things right if I surrender to His  
Will; that I may be reasonably happy in  
this life and supremely happy with Him  
forever in the next."

Reinhold Niebuhr

The Toolkit tools are essentially methods for breaking through the ego's pattern of denial and coming to grips with the unhealthy nature of a relationship with greater honesty. Like a rose, effective methods for dissolving denial and making progress beyond the ego's deceptive practices will smell as sweet even if they go by another name. The ABCs of love embody ancient wisdom drawn from many spiritually rooted, faith-based practical sources that are effective in presenting the freeing ego-alternative of truth and love. One of the primary purposes of this booklet is to provide the ABCs of love as a common language for practitioners of various paths of ego-freedom to engage in dialogue with each other in mutual appreciation for their joint efforts to co-create a new society rooted in love and truth. I hope that presenting this common ground will encourage us all to stand together as allies instead of finding excuses to perpetuate unnecessary disputes between practitioners of different paths of faith. Disputes among practitioners that exceed mutually respectful dialogue risk becoming cycles of mutual violation.

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."  
Shakespeare (Romeo and Juliet)

Rather than engage in excuse making for violations, participants in a relationship can release negative energy and transition towards mutual appreciation simply by admitting 1) that neither party desires repetition of the violation that took place in the acting-out stage and 2) that the participants need help to disengage from the cycle of mutual violation and engage instead in a cycle of transition. That step of honesty is helpful if the participants next act out their honesty by seeking and receiving effective help. Taking this step may be the first step on a long journey, but first steps are needed for any journey to begin. All along the journey each person needs to engage in adequate self-care (self-stewardship).

The journey of transition may require more patience than participants are accustomed to investing in a relationship but it can bear fruit if participants are faithful in practicing the ABCs of love. If wisdom counsels it, participants can arrange for more space in their relationship and allow time for new skills and attitudes to develop before expecting their relationship to show signs of entering into transition from a cycle of violations to a cycle of mutual appreciation. Examples of mutual appreciation in these early steps may include the participant's acknowledging that each is trying a new approach and finding it awkward. In the presence of third-party listeners, it may be helpful to share emotions according to the HEM and allow each other's heart time and space to honestly grieve. It exceeds the scope of this booklet to cover all elements of the transitional cycle. As participants in a relationship explore professional help and/or lay support groups diligently, their efforts will bear fruit. Keep in mind that it is not a failure if the help found empowers participants to let go and move on. Letting go in some way is always necessary. Moving on may turn out to be the best option for everyone. When truth sets people free of a relationship, the benefits are never one sided. They are always mutual.

### Pretense/Truce Stage of Violence

As Illustration 6 states, survival mode is one of the ego's habits that participants in a relationship must take into account. Long-term relationships that have ceased to promote mutual growth among their participants are especially prone to lapse into survival mode by habit. Survival is more appealing than

failure to survive but when it becomes an obstacle to thriving it is harmful. The ABCs of love promote both thriving and growth beyond survival as sustainable qualities of life. To thrive and grow it is not enough to pretend that everything is OK and hide from the truth that issues are avoided in order to maintain a truce. A truce based on pretense extends the cover story set out in the excuse-making stage. It attempts to “prove” the cover story is real. Yet, it’s not real and never was. Because only the truth sets us free to move beyond the ego’s cyclical games and pretenses, a truce can only be temporary. While energy is locked up trying to maintain a truce as long as possible, the emotional energies not expressed in healthy ways build gradually to an explosive level. This build-up fuels the next Acting-Out Stage.

### Emotional Build-Up Stage of Violence

Because the cycle of mutual violations is a closed system, it provides no safety valves or vents for relieving emotional pressures. The participants’ emotions remain confined within this unhealthy relationship system. Why is this inevitable? Because healthy relationships, as we’ve already discovered, are based on simple principles of “Trust, feel and talk about things that matter.” The cycle of mutual violation is rooted in the ego’s assumption that it risks only more pain to trust anyone completely and that safety requires one to trust as little as possible. Participants in cycles of mutual violation play their cards close to their chest and do not disclose the hand they hold. They bet on “winning” the next round of the cycle without realizing yet that no one wins in this closed relationship system. Admitting that no one wins is a step towards gathering the motivation to introduce the transition cycle and to focus attention on transitioning into a cycle of mutual appreciation or exiting from the relationship entirely.

The emotional build-up stage is like building an *improvised explosive device* – IED. Unprocessed emotions packed tightly into a shrinking space provide the energy for the next explosive episode. As you read the text in the Emotional Build-up Stage of Violence box on Illustration 6, what comes to mind? Are you able to imagine how pretending that everything is OK and that there’s no need to face any issues with greater honesty perpetuates the cycle of mutual violation? Can you see how helpful, more positive energy can be introduced if even only one person reaches out for help and risks living differently? Being honest with oneself and at least one other person is a step towards discovering the courage to expand our I-zone of integrity to share more openly and honestly with others outside of the cycle of mutual violation. So long as a person fails to be honest with himself or herself, he or she is violating his or her own integrity. Having support of others to become more honest is important. Nothing about the cycle of transition involves going it alone. In fact, a transition from one cycle to the other necessarily involves being in relationships of trust with others so that one can learn again to trust oneself. Our egos endlessly try to prove that we are alone and helpless in the world it fabricates as its fake substitute for the beloved community. To invest our faith in a new reality of “not being alone and helpless” defies the ego’s grip on our minds and allows us to move forward beyond cycles of futility. The ego fabricates knock-offs that knock us down. We get up as we embrace love’s reality! In this Jesus calls us to believe and follow him.

“Futility and senseless war pit the rich against the poor.”  
Eric Andersen (song *Rolling Home*)

The cycle of mutual violation is a cycle of uttermost futility. In contrast, cycles of transition and mutual appreciation are cycles of ultimate utility. When cycles of mutual violation prevail in our family relationships, they train us to engage in similar cycles in all the rest of the relationships in our lives.

That's why the lyrics from the song *Rolling Home* capture the end result of futility: senseless wars and growing disparity between the rich and the poor. If we truly desire to end war and disparity of resources and opportunities among social classes, we must practice the ABCs of love in whatever vocabulary we find most acceptable. This booklet presents on set of vocabulary that may provide many with common ground upon which to build the beloved community one brick of Authentic content of character alongside another Bonded together in Cooperation by the power of love as Jesus and MLK Jr. envisioned love can be shared once we join together in unity as God's people – by whatever paths of faith we walk with God.

### Exploring the Cycles through Continuous Dialogue

As with other Toolkit tools, it is not the purpose of this booklet to "explain" all possible ideas associated with Illustration 6. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then let's allow Illustration 6 to encourage us to share the words that come to our hearts and minds as we gather in dialogue about it and discover within ourselves all the wisdom and understanding that we need. By sharing the gold nuggets of wisdom and insight we each bring forth from within us as we "trust, feel and talk about things that matter," we experience the beloved community in action in our own lives and grow increasingly confident in our capacity to sustain it as an ever-growing community for all who desire to participate in it on God's terms. God is already fully committed to His/Her participation in our adventure in societal creativity. All that God awaits is our wholehearted commitment to participating in it with Him/Her.

### **Epilogue – Mutual Appreciation Paradigm (Paradise) – M.A.P.**

This booklet introduces the ABCs of love primarily through six Illustrations contained in the Toolkit. This Epilogue introduces the "social structure" or "beloved community" we can build by using these tools. If we use these tools constructively, what's the result? What's the "big picture" or context of the ABCs of love look like? It looks like paradise on Earth. It is not only a habitat for humanity. It's a habitat for divinity too. I call it the Mutual Appreciation Paradigm (MAP). It's built of relationships among whole persons relating to one another within cycles of mutual appreciation. Skills and attitudes that establish and sustain mutually appreciative relationships form an "orientation" in life. It is a spiritual orientation within which these major pillars of truth support the MAP on the bedrock of divine love (refined statements of these pillars of truth will be further formulated by the members of a MAP):

1. God is the One Holy, All-loving Supreme Being who created us but we do not create God.
2. All humans, without exception, are created in God's nature in all aspects of our wholeness.
3. God has a will that eternally offers the gift of unconditional love and all its benefits to all of us and it is best that we discover God's will and heed it for our individual and collective benefit.
4. The MAP is designed to discover the Divine Will, which may transcend what individuals might otherwise will, desire or expect. Our privilege as God's children is to discover and live by the Divine Will of Grace and Love in our relationships with God and each other.

5. God reveals His/Her Divine Will within relationships of two or more people who are self-disciplined, sanely reasoning and mutually trusting and accountable to living as God's children.
6. People engaged in shared discovery/revelation of God's will are free to seek, express and discuss among themselves the truth about God's will without fear of any form of personal reprisal or loss or hope of any personal reward or gain for any input or viewpoint offered.
7. Participants in a MAP, all in good faith, ask probing questions and examine and evaluate the possibilities of biases and other distortions introduced into the process of seeking God's will.
8. Each person who engages in this process discloses the results of his or her inquiry to the rest of the group who subject them to a similarly shared, good-faith scrutiny and Spirit-guided inquiry.

One fruit of faithful adherence to this Spirit-guided process is an ever-improving process by which God's will is most clearly discerned. Another is discovery of an ever-closer approximation of God's pure will of unconditional love. The process puts checks and balances in place to guard against all versions of hypocrisy. It does not guard against heresy. In fact, it is intentionally open to heresy, controversy, minority positions, dissenting reports, etc. Even as the outcome of the process is designed to be a consensus on "what to do," behind that consensus will in all likelihood be disclosed various countervailing concerns that remain in view as the group implements each decision. By not hiding what the collaborative group process identified as being at stake, and its level of significance to each member, the process offers opportunities to consider midcourse corrections as the group implements decisions and to reconsider the entire matter as feedback is welcomed and received while a decision is put into practice.

An anti-hypocrisy process is essential to a decision-making process that has the potential to provide answers for the whole of humanity. The Wholeness Archetype is a model for every individual throughout the whole of humanity. It springs from the core idea that the will of all human beings functioning collectively in a healthy manner on behalf of the best interests of all of humanity aligns most closely with God's will. Its ethical principle is simple: *the highest good for the greatest number = the best interests for all as God defines "best interests."*

What is best for all humanity? Is discovering the answer too great a task to undertake? Or is discovering the answer essential to the welfare of humankind as well as Nature around the globe and indispensable as an undertaking? If essential and indispensable, then the decision-making model offered by the Toolkit and MAP offers a practical way to undertake its discovery. *The purpose and function of a MAP is to create and sustain relationships that are devoted to everyone's personal growth, freedom and joyful self-acceptance, self-understanding and self-expression as each becomes a fully contributing and benefitting participant within the culture of peace and love ("beloved community") a MAP sustains.*

A MAP's capacity to fulfill its function and perform according to its promise is rooted in its purpose. That is why its purpose is stated upfront and must be kept in mind. The "why" of the MAP is identified clearly so that the "how" questions are addressed most effectively from the perspective of the "why."

The MAP pattern will promote the best interests of all participants if all participants are willing to agree that our best interests are to promote each other's maximum experiences of love, truth, integrity, trust, personal growth, self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-understanding, self-expression, freedom, joy

and ultimate capacity to live a life worth living and reap the life-enriching rewards of devoted participation. In short, a MAP culture or society promotes the best interests of all of its participants because everyone in it serves as part of everyone else's emotional support and guidance system. In this manner, all MAP participants "pre-serve" life for all participants because each participant's healthy, open and honest wholeheartedness is vital to the welfare of the whole community. Thus, a MAP is the *pattern not of this world* to which God – as speaking through Paul – calls us to conform through renewal of our minds as we shed our egos and emerge beyond ego as authentic beings of integrity and wholeness.

Participating in a MAP is an act of intentional goodwill as well as of heartfelt desire. It expresses our heart's universal desire to be free "to love and be loved in return," as the movie *Moulin Rouge* puts it. It is more than a "desire." It is "desire" blended with "will" into a *passionate commitment* to peace among all peoples of goodwill – a purposeful decision made with resolve to overcome whatever obstacles may seem to arise to hinder full participation. Obstacles will arise because a MAP differs from the social conditioning ("pattern of this world") most participants endured growing up. It is likely that, to some degree, all participants learned to relate to themselves and others differently from the way of a MAP. For this reason, a MAP differs from the comfort zone or familiar territory from which we are moving when we move into a MAP. To move into it, we are agreeing to change our ways of thinking, feeling, deciding, acting and relating as necessary. The mutual support we share (give and receive) pro-actively within a MAP aids each of us in our transition from the fear-based relationship culture in which we were raised into our new MAP of choice, a wholly alternative, love-based culture. The MAP is a model for a culture of peace offered as the alternative to the cultures of violence plaguing modern societies.

Every socialization process is designed to help a participant become comfortable within the culture or subculture into which he or she is welcomed. As infants, we trust our parents and others who influence us to lead us into and train us to belong within the set of relationships that is best for us. Many of us are not happy with the outcome of this investment of our trust – our most precious commodity. Our hearts are not satisfied. Our relationships turn out not to be as fulfilling as we'd hoped and allowed ourselves to expect. We often find ourselves asking privately "Is this all there is to life and love?" Our minds sometimes spin in circles searching for clues that will lead us to the "more" our hearts desire. The MAP is designed to intentionally open participants to experience increasing clarity about that vaguely sought-after "more." What is "it?" Experience will show "it" to us for all it is. To move into "it" we have to remove our trust from former targets of trust and risk refocusing it on more worthy targets.

To move from any existing relationship paradigm into a MAP requires living intentionally, not haphazardly or unconsciously. A MAP is a culture of conscious awareness of matters that ego's previous cultures taught us to ignore because they threatened the ego's sovereignty over our lives. On the next page are some examples of the shifts in focus and orientation that a MAP calls us to make:

<i>Ego's Critical/Competitive/Judgmental Paradigm</i>	<i>Love's Mutual Acceptance/Appreciation Paradigm</i>
I must look to others for my best guidance	I may look within myself for my best guidance
I cannot trust myself to know what's best for me	I can trust myself to know what's best for me
I am basically unworthy of love and must earn it	I am born worthy of love and can share it readily
The most valuable aspect of my life is what I do	The most valuable aspect of my life is who I am
I am here to make others happy at any cost	I am here to be joyful and share my joy with others
I cannot afford to be too honest	Honesty is the only way I'll be free to be me
The best times of my life are behind me	The best time of my life is in every now moment
Sharing my feelings is too risky and safer to avoid	Sharing my feelings caringly creates my best life

There are other ways to compare and contrast a MAP with the paradigms in which most of us are currently doing our best to get along – and survive, but rarely thrive. A one-sentence summary of the difference is contained in the subtitle of Anodea Judith's book Waking the Global Heart. Her book is about "Humanity's rite of passage from the love of power to the power of love." So, too, is the MAP. The MAP implements the insights contained in Dr. Judith's book and in the best teachings of myriad other authors who have written about the social transformation that occurs as people rise up to help each other bring out the best in each other. This is the mind-renewing, nonconforming transformation of which Paul wrote in Romans 12:2 and that MLK Jr. envisioned. One of its most challenging features is shared power in contrast to hierarchical, top-down, coveted-and-fought-over power. Because people tend to share power more readily under circumstances infused with compassion, it is vital that all participants in a MAP view themselves and each other with compassion (in contrast to the critical, judgmental way most of us learned to relate to ourselves and others). One way to do that is to realize that all of us feel powerless deep inside when we are living within competitive paradigms of power-grabbing rather than within cooperative paradigms of power-sharing. Within power-grabbing paradigms, only temporarily do we feel secure about how much power we have; so we crave more. Within a MAP, since power is shared readily, there's always enough power for everyone to feel safe, take risks, explore and grow.

Typically we are more likely to set aside our differences and have compassion for and help each other when faced with a common disaster or enemy. Once the common disaster or enemy has vanished, our motivation to remain mutually helpful fades and many fall back into our former ways. Essentially our former ways were based on the assumption that people are separated into different groups by whatever demographics count most in each of our way of thinking. The assumption that some people are part of "us" and the rest are part of "them" pervades the thinking that keeps us in our former ways. When there's a common threat to our well-being, only temporarily do we set aside our fears of strangers, of the unknown and of what appears different or out of our control. Once the threat is over we tend to unconsciously reinvest in our fears. The MAP focuses on intentionally, consciously setting aside such fears (and any other fears) not temporarily but permanently so as to create a courageous "beloved community" that is hospitable to all

"that they may be one  
as we are one . . ."  
Jesus – John 17:22 (NIV)

people – current participants and newcomers alike. In sum, the MAP is based not on fear but on unconditional love, not on our faith’s investment in fear’s illusion of limited power and resources that causes competitive divisions but on our faith’s investment in love’s reality of unlimited power and fully adequate resources that we can share united in the oneness of which Jesus spoke as recorded in John 17.

Vital to the health and welfare of any MAP and all of its participants is faith in a Supreme Being from whom unconditional love flows bountifully to all people inclusively, without exception. This component is necessary in order to have a reference source of definitions and standards for such key elements as “unconditional love,” “truth,” “freedom,” “joy,” etc. It is also necessary to preserve the flow of shared power by referencing all beneficial power as flowing in infinite abundance from the Supreme Being directly to all of us, not through any one or few people. As the following description outlines, the MAP is not about what “I” think. It’s not based on one person’s opinion or even a few people’s opinions. It’s about and based on what “we” think and feel. The “we” includes the Supreme Being who created all of us to know the experience of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” as a challenging and rewarding journey shared with each other to our mutual benefit. The MAP invokes ideas that arise from the same Source as the words “We the People . . . in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish . . .” The MAP implements such values by intentionally honoring their Source and never forgetting that all people of faith in a universally benevolent and eternally forgiving Supreme Being are welcomed and empowered to participate. Others who define their faith in a Supreme Being differently or claim to have no such faith may join in the MAP whenever it occurs to them that they might want to change their mind and discover the benefit of exploring expanded faith beliefs. As the WA is the archetype for human wholeness, the MAP is the archetype for humankind’s oneness. It is an organic and sustainable social environment for every love-seeking member of humanity no matter how diverse an expression of humanity any person is.

Another way to look at the difference the MAP offers is a “judgment shift.” Most of us have been taught to exercise our judgment about right and wrong and expect that what is right will be rewarded and what is wrong will be penalized. Based on our participation in paradigms of reward and punishment, we’ve developed habits of thinking about what is “right” and what is “wrong” so as to maximize our rewards and minimize our penalties. Our definitions of what is “right” and “wrong” and what are “rewards” and “penalties” may differ from one family, social group or culture to another but we tend to subscribe to the system (or pattern) by which types of rewards and penalties are dispensed based on socially established criteria for “rightness” and “wrongness.” Beneath our consciousness the expectations of such a system guide us like railroad tracks we’ve forgotten we laid as children on which to operate our trains of thought. To transfer our allegiance from our culture of upbringing to our MAP of new choice, we will draw upon the wisdom of Rumi’s poem: “Beyond wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I will meet you there.” The MAP maps that field’s terrain to aid us in the required “renewal of our minds.”

We are inherently creatures of faith. Regardless of other orientations, since we cannot escape our innate faith-based orientation, we are wise to accept it and act consistently with it. We act upon our beliefs, which ultimately spring from whatever we invest our faith in. We need not necessarily invest our faith in a spiritual Supreme Being. We may place it in something else, such as “Science,” “Religion” or what a group or individual believes that we adopt as our beliefs. To transition into a MAP, it is essential to develop the capacity to re-examine all of our beliefs to which we have consciously and unconsciously pledged our allegiance and be willing to let go of beliefs that we discover are not helpful to our full participation in our MAP of choice.

While honoring our natural faith-based orientation, the MAP encourages us to re-examine all of the track we’ve laid to guide our habits of faith and judgment and consider tearing up or rerouting some track, and perhaps even laying new track, to connect more effectively with inner spiritual guidance so that our minds let go of judgmental ways of thinking and adopt more accepting and appreciative ways of thinking instead. The MAP is not based on the realm of cognitive development in which “reward and punishment” reigns and rules harden inflexibly as we seek to guarantee our “right” to receive praise and rewards and to be protected from criticism and penalties. Those of us who have discovered that such hardening of the arteries of thought do not serve us well when we engage others from different cultures and backgrounds will be motivated to participate in a MAP that reactivates the tender-heartedness of childhood through which wisdom and compassion may flow freely because fears do not stifle their flow.

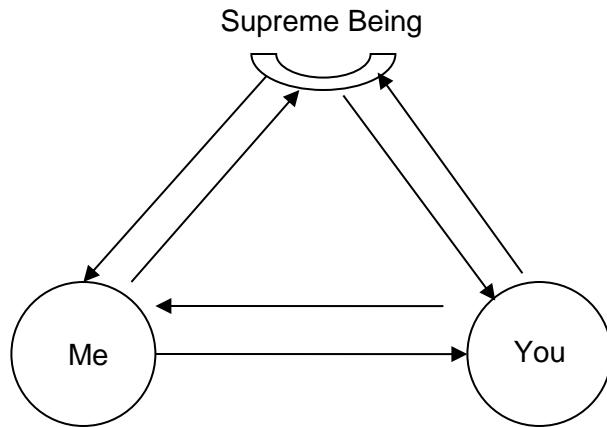
Our capacity to engage in a “judgment shift” is worthy of our exploration because it opens the door to building a culture of peace alongside the prevailing culture of violence and offering it as an alternative for others to join. The MAP extends a bridge from a rescue vessel to the *Titanic* while the ice-berg stricken vessel is still afloat. The *HMS Peacekeeper* is a viable alternate to the *Titanic* for sailing life’s high C’s. Those still wedded to the “reward-punishment” paradigm will find it challenging to explore and consider adopting this judgment shift. For a time, they may prefer to stay aboard the *Titanic*, fight over seats at the captain’s table and sing another verse of *Nearer, My God, to Thee*.

The MAP does provide rewarding experiences, not as judgments of praise, but instead as natural fruits of our faithfulness to a universally benevolent, eternally forgiving Supreme Being who encourages us to be universally benevolent and eternally forgiving towards others and ourselves as well. Release from guilt and blame, pride and shame and others of judgment’s opposing tensions will motivate many participants to explore the MAP’s capacity to reconcile paradoxes. Others who are not yet ready to be set free from negative orientations will resist participation in the MAP and may even wander away for a time while preferring to remain in their comfort zone where denial, guilt, blame, pride and shame still prevail.

#### *Essential building blocks of the Mutual Appreciation Paradigm*

To build a viable MAP that works for all participants, it is necessary to begin with the basic building block or “unit of participation.” Unlike many other social paradigms, the MAP’s basic unit of participation is not an individual. It is a partnership (relationship). The partnership always includes two

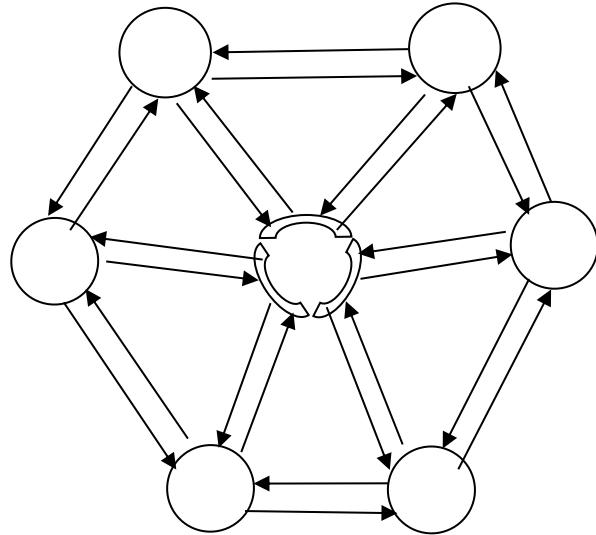
or more people together with the Supreme Being. It is a love triangle. Here is how that basic MAP unit looks in a rough diagram:



Every MAP building block consists of “me” partnered with “you” (plural or singular “you”) within the context of each of our relationships with the Supreme Being. The pairs of arrows pointing in opposite directions between each member of a partnership represent two-way relationships that the partners cultivate. The arrows can stand for various concepts of relationships. For example, the arrows can stand for the two-way function of effective communication consisting of listening and speaking or more broadly receiving and transmitting. In a more universal sense, the two-way-arrow pairs symbolize the giving and receiving nature of healthy relationships. The flow of power of all kinds is kept intentionally two-way and open to flow. This dynamic nurtures the flow of energy at all levels within a partnership. Flow prevents stagnation, purges toxins and continuously introduces revitalization, creativity, growth and resulting community benefits because the Supreme Being participates.

Empathy is the trait in human beings that permits each partner to sense intuitively the emotional energies present in the partnership. Love is the revitalizing energy of life that flows within the partnership, sourced from and shared with the Supreme Being and shared between (or among) the human partners. One purpose of this partnership concept is to overcome the common misconception that each of us is “on our own” here and that independent self-reliance is the ultimate aim of human life. This model emphasizes that interdependence and mutual reliance form human life’s highest level, a condition of relationships that honors all human participants as uniquely capable individuals of great value, honors the supremacy of the Divine Partner and yet also honors the truth that an interconnected, integrated whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Instead of promoting the unhealthy assumption (illusion) of separateness or independence among human beings, this model promotes the healthy assumption (reality) that we are all interconnected through and because of our relationship with the Supreme Being. We’ll enjoy life most if we honor our native interconnectedness openly among “us” and enjoy the fruits of unity, solidarity or oneness as the Supreme Being originally designed us to enjoy. This model offers us Garden-of-Eden fruitfulness amid peace and goodwill!

In building a community using this basic unit of participation, we can assemble groups within the MAP of any size based on the symbolic diagram shown below. Note that this rough schematic reveals irregularities typical of human relationships. It fails to identify “me” and “you” but the circles remain to represent the wholeness of people engaged in this group. Who is “me” and who is “you” has become less important to identify than the fact that every community member is a whole person interconnected in relationship with the Supreme Being who created him or her.



The connection points with the Supreme Being look incomplete. The relationship arrows are untidy. One has to imagine additional arrowed lines linking participants all throughout the community. Note that the gaps and irregularities in this diagram suggest that individual and collective growth is anticipated. Space is allowed for growth. In fact, the provision of space and irregularity suggests that growth is expected to occur naturally, not to be judged critically but instead to be celebrated liberally. The MAP is a liberating paradigm. It defies perfectionism by its very nature. Even the Supreme Being is represented as not yet completely fixed in scope. The multifaceted creative process expands eternally.

The community’s interconnected nature nurtures maximum health and growth for all. Every member is positioned to listen in on the continuous conversation with God in which we are all capable of engaging. The Supreme Being is always transmitting inspiring ideas and impulses of divine love to each of us. The MAP helps us humans to accept the continuous flow of creative energy from the Source of Life Who is always engaging us in a grand journey together into the as-of-now Uncreated (heretofore greatly feared as the “Unknown”). Mystics of many paths of faith confirm this truth by their experiences. The purpose of this MAP is to encourage us to become better receivers of these divine messages. We all have the capacity to be attentive apprentice mystics and relationship wizards.

Another feature of this diagram is its adaptability to groups of varying sizes. Some groups may be best represented by a more multi-sided figure. Other groups may be best represented by clusters of multi-sided figures linked together like atoms forming a molecule. The diagram readily converts from a

two-dimensional figure represented in a plane into a three-dimensional figure with multiple planes and perspectives. As the graphic representation grows, it may become difficult to represent the connection with the Supreme Being clearly. That's OK because the original diagram of the basic MAP unit misrepresents it. Our Connection with the Divine is not actually structured as the rough diagram of the basic MAP unit shows. Our connections with God are within us as well as around us in fields of energy.

Eastern teachings based on the chakra system identify the heart chakra as the central intake portal for energy flowing into our hearts as Love (or Chi or another term for life's positive energy). Christianity and Judaism encourage us to "trust in the LORD with all our heart and lean not upon our own understanding" (paraphrased). Every path of faith in a benevolent, merciful Supreme Being who creates and sustains Life directs its followers to look inward through prayer, meditation and communion to sense guidance and draw sustaining encouragement from the Mysterious Divine. Our capacity to receive responses includes empathy and intuition. The Divine flows to each of us continuously to share with one another as if each is essential to the success and happiness of humanity as a whole, which we are. We sink or swim together. The MAP is designed to encourage us to float, swim, dive, cavort and be creatively productive while swimming in the Ocean of Love the Supreme Being creates for us to enjoy.

### *Basic Dynamics of the Mutual Appreciation Paradigm*

The MAP relies upon healthy group dynamics to support and encourage each individual participant in the community to thrive within a life worth living. The MAP promotes thriving, a dynamic life beyond surviving. As his definition for thriving, Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." He said this at his trial for heresy. His community disapproved of his teaching others to think beyond the conformist thoughts his community approved of. Like Jesus, Socrates was tried and condemned for teaching how to engage in renewal of one's mind as Paul encourages us to do. In a comparable way, the MAP contrasts with relationship paradigms that conform to competitive, power-struggle dynamics and preserve the status quo instead of embracing creative change aligned with humanity's progress. The MAP transports us into its visionary yet practical paradigm of love. The ego will react to this paradigm as "controversial." Resistance to thriving fully within a MAP is based on the ego's preference for the status quo, fear of change and related fears such as not being in control or not being approved of by participants in our former paradigm. Social approval will be a two-edged sword. Each participant in a MAP will be faced with deciding from what source to seek and draw approval.

Approval comforts us. We crave it because it reassures us that we belong to a group and are not alone. Social approval is available within the MAP in terms of encouragement from each other to continuously cultivate our best "content of character," embrace personal growth as a lifelong goal and undertake liberation from bondage to ego-fixed fears so as to enjoy greater freedom of self-discovery, self-acceptance and self-expression. Together participants in the MAP will welcome the *joy of life* available when we live as authentic beings while we intentionally focus on our spiritual nature as our true identity instead of allowing our material nature to falsely define our identity as ego does. To some degree

in the past we typically allowed cravings for social approval to imprison us within paradigms of judgment by which approval was dispensed as a reward for “good” (socially approved) thoughts, words and actions and was withheld as punishment for “bad” (disapproved) thoughts, word and actions. The MAP empowers us to grow free of social approval/disapproval’s vice grip and rise beyond ego’s limitations.

MAP dynamics incorporate principles of healthy relationships. These principles acknowledge that participation in society involves our taking up social roles but that our identities exceed those roles. For example, as we grow, we may choose to enter into, refine and express ourselves through roles of child, sibling, friend, lover, spouse, partner, parent, student, teacher, employee, employer, leader, follower, co-creator, collaborator, service provider, producer, consumer, worshipper, etc. Too often we lose track of our true identity as we strive to perform each role as best we can. Our authentic identity or personhood as life-and-love-sharing children of the Supreme Being matters most. In fact, as we learn to love ourselves in the light of our authentic nature and honor our integrity as whole persons, we are able to fulfill our various chosen social roles all the more gracefully and caringly with excellence.

In her book entitled It Will Never Happen to Me, Claudia Black discusses basic principles for healthy relationships within all roles. (Her book’s first edition was addressed to people recovering from being raised in families impacted by alcoholism. Adopting a broader focus, her second edition addresses people who are recovering from being raised in any family impacted by ego’s emotional dynamics that distort the health of relationships and teach less than healthy assumptions, attitudes and skills for relationships.) Principles for healthy relationships violate the rules of less healthy relationships. As Black writes, the rules of less-than-healthy relationships are “Don’t trust. Don’t feel. And don’t talk about things that matter.” In contrast, the rules of healthy relationships by which personal growth is encouraged are “Trust, feel and talk about things that matter.” It’s really that simple. As participants in the MAP master the art of trusting, feeling and talking about things that matter and overcome our resistance to doing so, we will emerge beyond ego’s patterns to enjoy life fully in naturally sustainable ways – while energized by and filled with unconditional love flowing to embrace us from the core of our beings.

The group dynamics of a MAP include commitment by every participant to be wholeheartedly devoted to active participation in a small group support system beyond the other operational groups of the MAP. These groups are “Integrity Groups.” Their purpose includes:

- 1) To support each person’s transition from his or her former paradigm into this MAP as a new “normal” cultural orientation within which he or she encounters rewarding experiences.
- 2) To sustain the MAP culture as a mutually beneficial experience for all participants.
- 3) To download from the Supreme Being divine ideas, values and priorities and insure that those ideas, values and priorities are shared and promoted throughout the MAP.

If Socrates is correct and if we’ve not been living lives as worth living as we might, we need encouragement to conduct self-examination that is just, reasonable and compassionate towards ourselves, especially in light of the high ideals that we discover the Supreme Being holds out for us to attain. Many

of us have avoided such a process because we are too hard on ourselves and tend by habit of upbringing to judge and condemn ourselves harshly, oftentimes more severely than we do other people. Because of bottled up feelings of guilt and shame we carry in secret pockets of our memories, we fear that others will judge and condemn us as harshly as we do ourselves. As a result, we often become obsessively perfectionistic or utterly undisciplined – or alternate between both extremes. The MAP interrupts the self-fulfilling prophecy of such cycles of self-abusive judgment to free us from their subtle power to dehumanize us, steal joy and deprive us of our destiny as mutually helpful, humbly serving companions.

The function of Integrity Groups is to intervene in the ego's cycle of self-condemning self-imprisonment by involving each of us in setting others free of guilt and shame so that we can be free ourselves. As we encourage others to emerge from beneath these habits of fear-laden self-judgment, we discover greater permission to emerge ourselves. The work of emerging beyond fear is ours to do, just as the work of self-examination encouraged by Socrates, mind-renewal espoused by Paul and character-building envisioned by MLK Jr. is ours to do. Yet the MAP can establish and maintain an emotionally safe, supportive and compassionate environment that values our self-recovery process as a high priority. As a community, we can continuously view each other with compassion and appreciation and recognize each other's progress in mastering the new way of relationships that makes all the difference to our individual lives and to the health and welfare of the communities in which we participate.

Integrity Groups will be like the atoms of which a community's molecule is composed. Details for establishing Integrity Groups exceed the scope of this booklet. They will involve dynamics comparable to how Jesus related to his disciples and be a mentoring model for holistic growth. It may be helpful that the membership of Integrity Groups be re-arranged periodically (perhaps annually) to insure that the whole MAP is supported by interactive relationships among all participants as they get to know each other more intimately and trust builds along a multitude of two-way avenues. The MAP will intentionally not permit cliques and other exclusive social groups to form. It will honor and support healthy family dynamics and growth-inspiring friendships.

### **Self-Challenge Menu**

To reap full benefit from practicing the ABCs of love, it is helpful to identify challenges that you want to address. Love begins with loving yourself. You are exercising your privilege to love yourself as your highest priority for now. Perhaps loving yourself as your current highest priority will seem awkward because you've become accustomed to setting aside your own needs and wants to first address others' expectations. It can be challenging to rebalance love to include you. To achieve a new balance that stabilizes around your true center of balance, it is necessary for now to counterbalance old habits with new habits. For a time, the period of counterbalancing may be uncomfortable as you emphasize self-love and may seem to neglect others. Trust the Spirit of Love to make sure that you do not forget to love others while learning to more fully love yourself. Love will include others as one way to remind you of your own significance and allow you to gain increasing self-confidence as a practitioner of love.

As you develop your menu, set your intention to make progress not to instantly become perfect. If perfectionism is a challenge, list it and plan to overcome it eventually. You do not have to face all of your challenges at once. List your initial menu items and then select the one or ones to tackle first, reserving others for later stages of your work in progress. Your menu of challenges is yours. Be creative in identifying what matters most to you as challenges. State them in your own words. You are creating your own menu. Use the list of challenges below to prompt you to develop your own menu. Add more as you notice additional challenges you want to include. Record your menu so you'll be able to return to it to acknowledge your progress – in your journal or diary, on your computer, on your bulletin board, etc.

*Sample issues to assist in creating your challenge menu:*

- What fears do you notice that cause you to hesitate to be and to express yourself around others?
- What are you afraid others might find out about you that might cause you to feel uncomfortable?
- What features have you wished were not part of you and have tried to minimize or hide out of shame? (Include features of your body, mind, emotions, relationships, habits, attitudes, desires, etc.)
- What experiences have you had that cause you to limit or expand how much you trust others?
- What past mistakes do you think about from time to time and wish you'd not committed?
- What past experiences do you wish had not happened? What experiences are you glad happened?
- How do you manage confrontation? Do you tend to avoid it or to rush to dominate the scene?
- Are you more likely to approach others or to wait for them to approach you?
- Where do you fall on the continuum from socially passive to socially aggressive? If your choice of tactics varies, what factors cause you to choose which tactic? For example, do you act differently in a one-on-one situation than in a larger group?
- How does having an audience /observers affect you? When do you feel “performance anxiety.”
- Do you believe that others are drawn to you or overlook you on account of certain features/qualities?
- Do you feel the need to perform or to please others in order to attract and/or hold their attention?
- Looking deeply into your life, what do you sense is missing that you want more of? Check out these possibilities among others: acceptance, attention, appreciation, affection, affirmation and approval.
- In your imagined dream life, what would you include that's not present now as you would prefer?
- How satisfied are you with how others value you? How satisfied are you with how you value others?
- How empathetic do you feel you are? How much empathy and understanding do others show you?
- What about your life causes you to be most grateful? Most guilty? Most regretful?
- How free to you feel to celebrate being who you are? To be generous? To be kind and gentle?
- What would you like to be freer to do that you feel would be bolder and yet also true to yourself?
- How satisfied are you with your skills in developing friendships or more significant relationships?
- How have you given generously to others in ways that you would like now to receive back to you?

Set time aside to review and update your menu and appreciate your progress throughout your life.