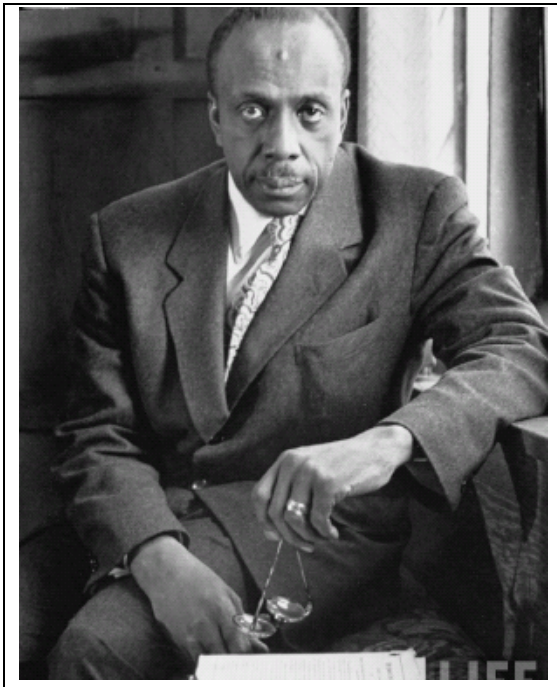


Howard Thurman: *Mysticism & Social Change*

Inner Light Ministries presents

Rev Dr Liza J. Rankow

Friday, May 20th and Saturday, May 21st ~ 2011



WHY YOU ARE URGED TO LEARN ABOUT DR. HOWARD THURMAN AND HIS TRANSFORMATION CONCEPTS

*A Message from
Rev Deborah Johnson*

Dr Howard Thurman teaches me to grapple with the tough issues of living – how to stand in principle when I would prefer the expeditious, how to rise above the slings and arrows of misfortune, how to develop the courage to keep walking in the direction of my surrender, but most importantly, how to love. Oh, it is easy enough to love the lovely and to love those who love you back. But to love those who despise you and intend ill will towards you, to love these takes another level of fortitude uncommon to the average experience.

Thurman keeps watch with me: “No one ever wins a fight.” “Perhaps the truest measure of a man’s character is the weapon he chooses in a fight.” “I want to be more loving in my heart so that with unconscious awareness and deliberate intent, I shall be a kind, a gracious human being.” “Keep fresh before me the moments of my High Resolve.”

“How good it is to center down.” “Think twice before you move your neighbor’s landmarks.” “There is a way in which a man *without* God is a seed upon the wind. . . There is a way in which a man *with* God is a seed upon the wind.” “Lord, Lord open unto me.” And the list goes on.

The purpose of the workshop is not to give you a history lesson or to pay homage to the past. The purpose is to present you with a touchstone that will carry you through the journey of both individual and societal transformation. There are many materials in the public sphere that point the way towards personal growth and development. There is, however, little guidance about the practical steps of building the Beloved Community. Dr Thurman is a way-shower.

I was first introduced to the works of Dr Howard Thurman by my mentor, Rev Dr Michael Bernard Beckwith. He was my Practitioner instructor for two years while he was a ministerial student. We were both studying at the original Institute of Religious Science at the former Home Office of the United Church of Religious Science in Los Angeles. We graduated from our respective programs at the same time and my entire class was part of the inaugural vision core for the Agape International Spiritual Center, which opened its doors later that year. He gave everyone in my class a copy of Thurman’s “For the Inward Journey,” a collection of Thurman’s writings compiled by his daughter Anne Spencer Thurman. That was 25 years ago this June in 1986, and the book has never left my side.

The socio-political influence of Dr Thurman cannot be emphasized enough. He and Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr were alumni of Morehouse College in Atlanta where Thurman was a classmate of King Sr, later known as “Daddy King.” Dr Thurman was like an uncle to MLK Jr and a mentor to him. Dr Thurman was a faculty member and Dean of the Chapel at Boston University when King earned his PhD in systematic theology there. Thurman and his wife, Sue Bailey Thurman, a lecturer in her own right, were the first Black Americans to be received by Mohandas Gandhi. The two were on a “Pilgrimage of Friendship” sponsored by the Student Christian Movement in 1935-1936. Gandhi expressed to them that he believed his methods would bear relevance to the freedom struggle of Black people in America and they were interested in exploring this. The concepts they brought back were instrumental in not only shaping the multi-racial US Civil Rights Movement but in solidifying non-violent protest as both a legitimate and effective method to achieving revolutionary change in the West. At the time there was little to no precedent in the US for non-violence as a tool of radical transformation. Today this tool is still a mystery, minimally used at best.

The basis of non-violence is not merely a refrain from the use of violence to win one’s objectives. It is the fierce application of forgiveness and unconditional love for one’s enemies, regardless of how egregious or horrific the actions. Such “soul force” empowers the otherwise oppressed, imbuing them with the moral authority to call for justice. Such a strategy engages the opposition and includes them in the vision of victory. No one is left behind. The goal is not to punish but to redeem, not to simply transfer power but to share it. True non-violence is rooted in the paradigm of Oneness.

If you do not have such compassion in your heart, your efforts at real change, personally or socially, will continuously be thwarted. Enthralled in divisiveness, new ideas without sufficient anchoring quickly revert back to their old patterns. Such dualistic conflict need not be externalized; an entire battle can play itself out inside of us.

The purpose of the Thurman workshop that Rev Dr Liza Rankow will be teaching at Inner Light is to help us build the emotional stamina and moral fortitude to be change agents. It lays the spiritual groundwork for “sacred activism.” Inner Light provides tools for transformation and the words of Thurman are such a tool. He continues to be an inspiration to people who inspire me such as Oprah Winfrey, Maya Angelou, and Alice Walker.

It is particularly important that those of us who live in California develop the emotional stamina for social transformation. California has been in the forefront of social justice for many years and still is leading the way. California was the first state to end racial segregation in public schools in 1946. The case, *Mendez vs Westminster* set the stage for the US Supreme Court decision *Brown vs Board of Education* in 1954 ending school segregation nationally. (Sylvia Mendez, one of the Mexican-American children at the center of the suit, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom earlier this year along with Dr Maya Angelou who was recently in Santa Cruz.) California, through *Sharp vs Perez* in 1948, was the first to abolish the miscegenation law, which prohibited White people in California from marrying Blacks, Asians, and Filipinos. Laws against inter-racial marriage were abolished nationally in 1967 in the US Supreme Court decision *Loving vs Virginia*. California is in the national forefront again on the repeal of Proposition 8 which Inner Light supports. Prop 8 amended the state’s constitution to eliminate the right of same sex couples to marry. The repeal process is currently underway in Federal Court.

Dr Thurman put California in the forefront of religious institutions and spiritual communities. In 1944 he co-founded with Dr Alfred Fisk, *The Church For The Fellowship of All People* in San Francisco, **the nation’s first interracial interfaith church**. Inner Light is proud to stand upon the shoulders of Dr Thurman and to carry on the legacy of developing cutting edge inclusive leaders for today.

Three years ago, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of MLK Jr’s assassination, we brought Dr Vincent Harding to Inner Light to discuss the “Beyond Viet Nam” speech he wrote for Dr King Jr, a riveting speech calling for a drastic departure in our values as expressed in our foreign and fiscal policies. I still believe it to be the most compelling speech that I have ever heard. Harding and King Jr were intimate friends and Thurman was a mentor to them both. We had access to Dr Harding through Rev Dr Liza Rankow, a founding member of Inner Light Ministries. The two of them and other associates of Thurman have recently teamed up with *Sounds True* to create a six-CD audio collection of some of Thurman’s most compelling archival recordings – sermons, meditations, lectures, and prayers.

Rev Dr Liza Rankow, an expert and frequent lecturer on Thurman's works, is a producer of the Thurman CD project, *The Living Wisdom of Howard Thurman*, hot off of the press. Inner Light is fortunate to be one of the locations where this material will make its debut. Friday night May 20, she will be showing a film of Thurman and presenting an overview of the material to be covered. Saturday, May 21 will be an interactive exploration of his key concepts – especially those related to spirituality and social change – and their application to our lives and this time.

You are strongly encouraged to participate in both Friday and Saturday. If necessary, you can attend only Friday night. However, Friday attendance is a prerequisite for Saturday's participation for anyone who has not previously studied Thurman's works with Rev Liza.

No one will be turned away for lack of funds. I especially encourage college age and young adults to attend.

This is not a workshop to be missed!!

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All are welcome – newcomers as well as those with some past study of Dr. Thurman. Copies of several of Thurman's books, and a recently released six-CD audio collection of some of his most inspiring sermons, meditations, prayers, and speeches will be available for purchase.

When: Friday, May 20, 2011 • 7:00pm-9:30pm (registration / doors open at 6:30pm)

Saturday, May 21, 2011 • 9:30am - 4:30 pm (registration / doors open at 9:00am)
(Saturday lunch is on your own.)

Where: Inner Light Ministries, 5630 Soquel Drive, Soquel, CA

Registration: Sliding Scale \$ 40 – \$120 for Friday and Saturday (\$10 for Friday only)

Please note: Attendance on Friday evening is a prerequisite for the Saturday workshop.

Readings: *Advance reading is strongly recommended. Please see online syllabus for details.*

Instructor: Rev Dr Liza J. Rankow is an interfaith minister and the founding director of OneLife Institute, a nonprofit organization based in Oakland, CA. She regularly teaches classes on Thurman in community and academic settings, and is producer / co-editor of the newly released six-CD audio collection *The Living Wisdom of Howard Thurman*.

Register: at Inner Light Ministries or online at www.innerlightministries.com

For more info email: education@innerlightministries.com or call 831-465-9090 x 206.