

## **Annual Meeting 2010 Report**

### **The Pearl of Great Price**

#### **Leide Lessa**

Monday, June 7, started really early for me, about 4:30 a.m. I finished packing, drove 45 minutes and arrived at the St. Louis airport. There I met a friend who was coming to Boston for the same reason—to attend the 2010 Annual Meeting of The Mother Church. When we arrived in Boston, his sister, a dear and longtime friend of mine, picked us up. The three of us arrived and parked not far away from the entrance of The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist. As we walked into the church and went to the auditorium, we saw the members of the Christian Science Board of Directors, in a very natural and loving way, greeting the attendees. We heard about 20 minutes of the beautiful organ music, and then the meeting started.

But before I report on the Meeting, let me mention what had happened over the weekend of June 5 and 6.

The original edifice of The Mother Church opened its doors for two hours for quiet thought and prayer on Saturday afternoon. The Mary Baker Eddy Library offered a book signing with author Kim Schuette, who discussed his book *Christian Science Military Ministry 1917-2004*, published in 2008. He described the rich history of Christian Science chaplaincy to serving military men and women of all denominations.

Later Saturday afternoon, approximately 445 people from 20 different countries and 36 states of the United States attended the workshop, "Talking with others about Christian Science," in the Sunday School building. Sixty facilitators and about 15 volunteers supported the meeting.

Christian Science practitioner, teacher, and member of the Christian Science Board of Directors Tom Black opened the meeting and set the tone by letting everyone know that any and all issues could be discussed during the meeting.

This meeting was recorded on video as a “workshop-in-a-box,” for use in the Christian Science field at membership meetings. You’ll be able to watch it in English in the upcoming months at <http://christianscience.com/readingrooms>.

Here are two special examples of good results reported from this workshop: One attendee who came to the meeting with a fever, cough, sore throat, and no voice was completely healed by the time she left the meeting. After the workshop, a woman from Chile, who went to the Prudential Mall near the Church, overheard a conversation about Christian Science as a cult. She put into practice what she had just learned. She introduced herself, corrected the misinformation about Christian Science, and everyone parted on good terms.

Many members who came to Boston early for Annual Meeting attended the Sunday Service at 10 a.m. and brought with them much joy, consecration, and gratitude. In the afternoon, the Mary Baker Eddy Library offered a talk with Robert Warneck, a Christian Science practitioner and teacher. He discussed the recently issued amplified edition of the book he co-authored with Yvonne Caché von Fettweis, *Christian Healer*. This new edition includes many more documented accounts of Mrs. Eddy’s healing work, and presents her life story as a narrative of healing.

Later on, in the Extension of The Mother Church, Alastair Willis, who has served as Assistant Conductor for the Cincinnati Symphony and Seattle Symphony, led a 90-minute hymn sing. The congregation sang hymns from the 1932 *Christian Science Hymnal* and from the recent Hymnal Supplement, as well as five new hymns. Alastair encouraged everyone to submit poems, melodies, or complete hymns, in English or other languages, for consideration for the next Hymnal Supplement. You can listen to this hymn

sing online at <http://christianscience.com/church/the-mother-church/annual-meeting>. Even if you don't speak English, you'll enjoy this feast of healing music and voices.

All these events prepared the thought and hearts of the participants to embrace 2010 Annual Meeting's theme—that Christian Science is indeed the "Pearl of Great Price."

At 1:00 p.m., Mary "Trinka" Trammell, CSB, current Chair of the Christian Science Board of Directors, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone present and on the web. Then she introduced the new Readers of The Mother Church, Sandy Sandberg, CSB, as First Reader, and Marian English, CSB, as Second Reader. Trinka also expressed gratitude and love for the departing Readers, Curt Wahlberg, CSB, and Beth Schaefer, CSB, and for the work of outgoing President of The Mother Church, Allison "Skip" Phinney, CSB. Then she introduced the President of The Mother Church for the coming year, Fujiko Signs, CSB. Fujiko was raised in Tokyo, Japan, educated in the United States, and currently splits her time between the two spheres, East and West, as a Christian Science practitioner, teacher, and lecturer.

After this introduction, the officers left the stage, and Fujiko read from the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. Following the readings, Fujiko invited everyone to pray silently and then repeat the Lord's Prayer out loud. Then everyone sang Hymn 391.

As evidence that this pearl of great price—Christian Science—is cherished around the world, The Mother Church is currently working with more than 200 informal groups worldwide to nurture their progress toward becoming Christian Science societies. Johanna Frontczak, who has been active in this effort, narrated the first video report from the field on Christian Science activity in the Philippines.

In late 2009, Johanna, along with the Board of Directors, traveled to the Philippines. In Manila, they visited two churches and heard how members value Christian Science as a healing resource for their community. Most people there are hungry for spirituality.

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Baguio City—six hours by car from Manila and a mile high in the mountains—was the group’s next stop. A local member, Leticia Hayes-Allen, explained that many Filipinos love Christian Science because, among other things, they find in it the answer to poverty. Christian Science teaches that everyone is rich in ideas and that God supplies everyone’s needs. Ella Grande, a Christian Science practitioner, and her father helped spread Christian Science in Baguio City after Ella’s mother was healed of stomach problems.

Following a two-hour drive farther into the mountains, the Board of Directors met with more than 200 people. They came from a dozen informal groups and one Christian Science society that have been meeting for decades in this remote area. These people expressed how much they value Christian Science in their lives.

After the video, Ned Odegaard, CS, Treasurer of The Mother Church, and Phil Davis, CSB, Manager of Committees on Publication, gave their reports. First, Ned asked Trinka to report on the financial numbers for the Church. The funds on hand currently are 455 million dollars. The Church has no indebtedness, and the expenditures for the past year were 102 million dollars. Ned added that the general fund stands at 164 million dollars. He explained that members provide funds to the Church through contributions, as well as subscriptions to the periodicals produced by The Christian Science Publishing Society, and purchases of products such as The Writings of Mary Baker Eddy.

Phil reported that about 135 Committees on Publication around the world, plus the Boston staff, work actively to identify impositions on public thought

about Christian Science, and then go out and correct them. These impositions involve ignorance of Christian Science, hostility, confusion of Christian Science with other religions, and the misperception of Christian Science as an unchristian cult or as dangerous because members don't go to doctors.

Next, the audience saw a video segment about how employees at The Mother Church value Christian Science as the pearl of great price. First Bill Dawley, Editor of the *Journal, Sentinel, Herald, Sentinel Radio*, and the website *spirituality.com*, explained that he sees testimonies of Christian Science healing every day—and that these say to him that the power of Christian Science is as strong today as it was when Mary Baker Eddy discovered this great truth. Following that, Linda Kohler, Manager of Christian Science Nursing Activities, added that nursing is part of the pearl, part of the completeness of the wonderful gift of Christian Science, and a practical example of God's care for us. And then Jen McLaughlin, Managing Publisher of the *Christian Science Quarterly* products and of General Publications, explained that today she sees the Bible Lesson as a powerful treatment for all who read it, for their families, for their communities, for Church, and for the world. The video also included brief comments from Matt DeJohn with the Technology Services Group and Michael Lombardi with the Security Department.

Following this video, Christiane West Little, CSB, and Skip Phinney, CSB, spoke about class instruction and the joy of continuous spiritual growth through yearly pupils' Association meetings. Christiane had the joy and privilege of teaching the 2009 Normal class, and now she's on the Board of Education. Two Christian Science teachers and practitioners joined Christiane and Skip via Skype: Georgia Bulloch from Houston, Texas, and Michael Seek from Berlin, Germany.

Skip emphasized that for both the teacher and the students, class instruction is a very spiritual experience—it's coming into the increasing conviction of

God's allness and His actuality. Christiane added that it's learning to heal, love, listen to God, and let one's self be led by God in everything.

Michael told the story of a woman who had been to many different doctors and was diagnosed with several diseases. After hearing of Christian Science, she called him and said, "Before you might agree to help me, I'd like to send you the two folders with the history of all my diseases." Michael thanked her and said, "This is not necessary, because I already know your history." When she asked, "From whom?" he said, "From God." He explained that the medical history was insignificant compared to her spiritual history, to the fact that she had inherited health, well-being, and happiness. Afterward, she experienced a quick healing. About two months later she wanted to understand how that healing happened, and she took class instruction.

The four teachers expanded on the value of Primary Class, and then Christiane ended this segment with Mary Baker Eddy's words: "You will need, in future, *practice* more than theory" [*Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*, p. 281].

Next, Julia Wade, soloist of The Mother Church, appeared in an inspiring video segment, talking about her work as a musician and expressing God through her work.

Fujiko then invited the audience to join in singing Hymn 454 from the Supplement, with words by Mary Baker Eddy.

After the hymn, three people from the audience, and a father and son from northern California who had prerecorded their testimony, shared deeply moving healing experiences. Healings are central to the practice of Christian Science, because they prove the continuous value of this "pearl of great price."

The Board of Directors—including Trinka Trammell, Tom Black, Margaret Rogers, and Michael Pabst—then joined their colleague Nate Talbot as he

gave the Clerk's report. A few months ago they had invited members to share with them what Christian Science, this "pearl of great price," means to the world. People from around the globe contributed their ideas, right up to the last few minutes, via email, Facebook, and Twitter. Margaret Rogers shared a message received that morning from Tanzania. Tajud wrote: "I'm truly in awe of what I'm learning in Christian Science, and so very, very grateful for Mrs. Eddy and The Mother Church. Most of all I'm grateful for God, for bringing Christian Science into my life when I was a totally worn-out, weary mortal, tiring of living a senseless, material existence. Today I am transformed and renewed."

Michael Pabst read a tweet from a woman named Shirley, who wrote: "'Pearl of great price,' available to all, reports from around the world confirm." He also said an email from a woman named Janna, from Leawood, Kansas, made him think of his fellow countrymen in East Germany, who suffered from unfavorable treatment by the communist government, and who had to protect their "pearl," Christian Science, risking their lives. Janna wrote that as she grew up in an area that's called a "tornado alley," she would often be taken into the basement when there were tornado warnings. She said: "When these warnings would occur, my parents would instantly gather their most precious possessions, and head to the basement. But the only possessions they took to save were us kids, my mother's purse, the pets, and the Bible and *Science and Health*." She was raised with a sense of the infinite value of the books representing the Comforter. In one of those tornadoes they lost everything—their house, clothes, photo albums, jewelry, and even their car. But they did not lose that understanding of the infinite value of the Comforter.

Tom said that several of the emails referred to the need to protect the Comforter and "the pearl of great price." And he said it was interesting that Jesus had cautioned us, "Don't cast your pearls before swine lest they turn and rend you."

Margaret expanded on this idea by saying that the statement of Jesus about not casting your pearls before swine is one that Mary Baker Eddy quoted frequently in her writings— but that it's not about keeping Christian Science just to oneself. Mary Baker Eddy was never afraid of sharing. She had a great love for humanity and for God that just compelled her to give her revelation to the world. Nate then interjected that Mrs. Eddy's mother-love was a fearless sense of love that everyone reflects from God.

Trinka continued by reading an email sent in by Ann, from North Lincolnshire in the UK: "The Mother Church is reaching out, keeping the priceless, precious pearl safe for all mankind." That's the real purpose of Church, to safeguard that pearl so that it will be there for all humanity, forever.

Tom added that Mary Baker Eddy was a woman of incomparable spiritual majesty, who was vividly aware of the allness of God while meeting all the attacks of error. She was unlike any other, and in some respects, greater than anyone except Christ Jesus.

Nate shared what a man named James from Connecticut wrote: "This [pearl] may require the same sacrifices to keep it, as it did to purchase it in the first place." Then there was an email from Joy in Florida, who said this "pearl of great price" offers a system of universal healthcare. Christian Science is universal and it's revelation, it's the second coming of the Christ, it's the Comforter that Jesus promised.

Nate then invited everyone to take just a few minutes and quietly turn thought to God, pray together, and cherish this "pearl of great price."

Finally, as a benediction, Fujiko invited everyone to sing Hymn 324 and then adjourned Annual Meeting 2010.