



# HGSA

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## Harmony Grove Spiritualist Association

### Into the Light: Waking Up and Reigniting

By Rev. Annette Cavender

**T**his year, 2020, a year of clarity of vision, I write this letter within the silence of quarantine, where we are challenged to find unity in solitude, togetherness in separation.

This is such a contrast to last year's President's letter and the cover article by then Vice President Rev. Dr. Mindy Sloan, where the theme was unity and moving forward together, and that theme certainly dominated our path through the last half of 2019. Collectively we saw a movement



"Breaking Free" By April Cunningham

toward coming together in so many ways at Harmony Grove, nourishing each other through food and fellowship after Sunday services, supporting each other through individual struggles and successes, through the natural processes of births and passings, through illnesses and recoveries... to name just a few ways we came together.

In many ways, 2019 feels like it was practice for the challenge we are experiencing this year.

It is no small irony that I began composing this letter on the 6th anniversary of the Cocos fire, with our beloved Harmony Grove in shutdown mode, much as it was in May 2014...for very different reasons.

At the beginning of this year, we were elated to receive the County's long-awaited seal of approval on our rebuild plans (formally known as our application for a Minor Deviation to our Major Use Permit).

When we began this process, we had no clue how lengthy and arduous the journey ultimately would be. So much hard work, followed by periods of waiting between numerous engineering

studies, designs and redesigns of our site map, adjustments to plot sizes to allow more space for safety between residences, designs and redesigns of our proposed church, so much brainpower invested into how to deal with things like septic systems and watershed and road widths, so many submittals of plans to the County, waiting sometimes months for comments on our plans from the different agencies and departments, and then beginning the process of studies and designs and re-envisioning all over again.

The entire way, it was always about bringing our beautiful 124-year-old community into compliance with today's standards and safety codes and into alignment with a new vision of who we are and all that we can become. So much re-envisioning of how to do what we have always done with an eye toward progress and unity and safety.

In Fall of 2015, I was honored to follow in the footsteps of Rev. April Cunningham, President at the time of the fire, who led the initial steps toward communal healing from a solid foundation of love, and Rev. Coy Johnston, who picked up the torch and put herself wholeheartedly into the work of HGSA recovery, leaving a solid roadmap to navigate the challenges toward rebuilding not just our physical structures—but more than that, our community. During my time as President, my vision has always been to honor the best of who we have been in the past and bring it with us into our future as we strive to become the best of who we can be as a collective whole.

We now stand on the verge of moving forward with our rebuild, even as we await the safe

reopening of Harmony Grove and the County during this challenging pandemic. It feels like both a finish line and a starting line at the same time. The nose-to-the-grindstone, nuts-and-bolts work of the past six years is complete, leaving infinite possibilities for the next HGSA President to lead our community into the future, in alignment with the guidance of Spirit.

It feels like we are horses champing at the bit. As frustrated as we are to be unable to take our fresh County approval and charge into the future, nearly three months of shutdown so far has put us all in a place of reflection on our personal, collective, and spiritual paths ahead.

At the beginning of the year, before news of pandemic began to spread, I was so excited for the clarity of vision that I sensed ahead of us. Progress felt tangible, as I reflected on how this clarity would be revealed, knowing, of course, that darkness comes before the light and light is always to be found within the darkness.

As we have sat in our separate homes, continuing our lives in very, very different ways than ever imagined, I have seen many people stepping up as beacons of light, offering hope and humor and spiritual comfort to each other in communities on social media and other online platforms. We miss that face-to-face contact, the physical hugs with friends, the tangible connections that bind us as community. We have learned to accept the virtual as a temporary substitute for the physical. What I have learned from all of this is to stay in alignment with principles I have learned in my spiritual work: There is no need to fear moving into the darkness if we trust that Spirit/Source/God is guiding us into the light. We look for



"Black Swan" By April Cunningham

the good that comes out of adversity, because it is always there. We look for Divine Love as the antidote to fear and suffering, because it is always there. We look for ways to be of service to our fellow humans, trusting that they will reciprocate in our time of need.

Does that mean it is our obligation to solve everybody else's problems? Definitely not... we are not superhuman and we are not God. Neither is perfection required. We are perfect in our imperfections, and as spiritual beings we are tasked with doing our best to support each other, as we follow the guidance of Source to bring love and light into areas of need.

After the silence of the past couple of months, our society is slowly beginning to reawaken, as if we had been in collective slumber. Recently as I navigated the streets of downtown San Diego on the way to an appointment, I was heartened by signs of the world waking up, slowly, and in mostly responsible ways. Businesses were receiving deliveries in anticipation of opening their doors again. Restaurants and small shops were cleaning and rearranging their interiors and placing tape at six-foot intervals and plexiglass between tables so patrons might gather safely again. They are adapting to a new way of being, as we all are, for our collective survival.

So many of us are craving a sense of normalcy, a return to life as it existed before lockdown. And so many others have taken the periods of quiet as an opportunity to reflect on changes they want to make, how they want to create their lives anew. What was working before? What was fulfilling for you? What was not?

How has your life changed in quarantine? How has it helped you redefine and re-envision your purpose in this life?

What best parts of yourself and the world around you did you discover during the silence?

What best parts of yourself will you take with you into this new way of being?

It is no coincidence that, at the same time as we re-envision the future of Harmony Grove, we are called to re-envision our individual lives as well.

I look forward to being able to gather with you at the Grove again very soon and share the wisdom we have each gained in these past months.

In love and light,  
Rev. Annette Cavender  
President, HGSA Board of Directors



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