



The Institute for Spiritual Development

DECLARING OUR PRINCIPLES - AFFIRMING OUR VALUES.

In its initial founding documents The Institute for Spiritual Development adopted the principles of the spiritualist movement as the statement of belief. As the Church and our philosophy evolved, it was time to formulate a standard of beliefs which expressed our unique understanding and identity. Having moved to a broader and more metaphysical identity, a gathering of ministers formulated our current Declaration of Principles which now defines us.

These statements not only expressed the core of the church's identity but more importantly, stipulate the beliefs which unite all ISD members. The principles form a platform of uniformity, while still allowing for the expression of individual leaves. In its finest expression, The Institute is a non-denominational, non-dogmatic church celebrating the diversity of spiritual thought and experience through which all may learn, prosper and grow. Sharing the extraordinary wealth of spiritual expression without setting unreasonable standards of doctrine, the Church and the Declaration of Principles stand as an invitation to the Seeker of Truth, a welcome oasis for the expression of unconditional love and acceptance.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

1. WE BELIEVE IN INFINITE INTELLIGENCE.

The principles are not placed in any order of importance, except this first one! It is from this that all that follows has meaning. Often, one of the first questions asked about The Institute is, "Do you believe in God?"

First, notice that we state, "We believe..." That is a powerful and unequivocal statement. It has a force so strong as not to be denied. As the first statement of the Declaration of Principles, we attest to the existence of a Supreme Entity from which all creation flows. It is the source of all things visible and invisible. It is the beginning and the end of all manifestation.

Yes, we believe in God in a most sweeping and definitive way. In this statement, we envision God as Infinite Divine Mind. Now, what does that mean? The concept stems from the first Hermetic Law of the Universe which states that,

“The All (God) is mind, and the Universe is mental.” The ideas which flow from the Infinite Mind break forth as the Created Universe. From the smallest subatomic particle, to suns, moons and stars, from humanity to angels - all existences in the mind of God. Everything, and I mean everything, in the manifest universe exists in and arises from the mind of God.

2. WE BELIEVE THAT INFINITE INTELLIGENCE EXPRESSES ITSELF IN ALL EXISTENCE AND IN HUMANITY IS A MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE LOVE.

As you cannot separate an artist from his/her work, the presence of the Infinite Creator must be inherent in every aspect of the Manifest Universe. God is imminent and eminent in Its creation. Indeed, the creation is God and the Divine Nature is imparted as each creation is able to attain it. Humans occupy a level that enables us to consciously participate in the divine quality of unconditional love. This is a love based not on need or judgment, but on the recognition that each person is a reflection of us and an expression of the Divine in creation. In one of the most dramatic descriptions of God, the Evangelist John states, “God is love.” As participants in the Divine Nature, it follows that we experience and express the perfect love of the Infinite Mind.

3. WE AFFIRM THE UNITY OF ALL LIFE EVERYWHERE.

As all things flow from the Infinite Mind, it follows that all life is one, whatever its manifestation. The bond of creation ties all living things to each other. Hermetic philosophy states, “There is no great, there is no small, in the Mind that created all.” Clearly, this is an acknowledgement of the inherent connection uniting all elements of the Manifest Universe. Living things possess an innate recognition that other living things are connected in a vast web of life. Even a mosquito is aware of its connection to human life. Human consciousness makes us aware of our special relationship with all other living things.

4. WE BELIEVE IN COMMUNION WITH ALL PLANES OF EXISTENCE, AND THAT MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION FLOWS FROM THIS CONNECTION.

Everything is vibration. What distinguishes one thing from another is merely the rate at which it vibrates. In this vibratory universe, we are capable of both emitting and receiving vibrations. As we attune our receptors, we are capable of connecting with, and thereby communicating with, the vibrations above and below our own as well as those closest to us.

Examples are pets, nature, spirit world, God. Every religion has as its basis the ability to communicate with the Creator and vice versa. When we consciously attune ourselves to a vibration we are able to connect and communicate with that level of vibration.

5. WE AFFIRM THE DIVINE RIGHT OF EACH INDIVIDUAL TO SEEK THE TRUTH IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS AND THAT LIVING IN HARMONY WITH THAT TRUTH DEFINES TRUE SPIRITUALITY.

“Know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free.” Funny thing about truth, there is no absolute truth in the finite world. That is the purview of the Infinite Mind and belongs to It only. Therefore, all truths, no matter who is espousing them, are only partial and incomplete. We have been given a higher sense which allows the individual to perceive the truth which resonates in him/her. This implies that we are then responsible to live up to what we perceive as true. Aligning yourself with your truth establishes your deepest connection with God. Living life based on principles and philosophy the individual accepts as true, place each on their path of spiritual enlightenment. When we follow the dictates of our inherent conscience we are at peace with our spiritual and moral direction. True spirituality results from a conviction to what is true to each.

6. WE AFFIRM THAT SPIRITUAL UNFOLDMENT IS PROGRESSIVE AND UNENDING, AND THAT THE DOORWAY TO REFORMATION IS NEVER CLOSED AGAINST ANY SOUL.

Any ongoing process demonstrates an evolutionary process in which the person, condition or situation experiences a progressive development. The drive of evolution is constantly upward leading to ever higher and progressive states of being and awareness.

If we consider that the end of all existence and experience is the ultimate reunion with God, then we must acknowledge that all of the experiences of life should point us to an ever-expanding spiritual awareness. To the end that “Our hearts are ever restless till they come to rest in Thee,” lifetime after lifetime is a perpetual journey of spiritual awakening until, like our brother Jesus we may say, “Into your hands I commend my spirit.”

How exciting to realize that our purpose in life is not what job you do, or how much money you make, or how much power and authority you have, or how beautiful you are, or any other superficial and mundane qualities or achievement. Our purpose and ultimate destiny is to reunite with our Loving Creator.

This may be an area where we appear to differ with traditional belief systems. Jesus reminded us that, “In my Father's house there are many mansions.” The Creator can but love Its creation, and while that creation may sometimes appear to misalign itself, it must forever remain in the Mind of The All. There is room there for all.

If, through ignorance of the law, a person chooses the lesser good over the greater good, that individual still exists in perfection and in perfect love in the Mind Its Creator. If the Mona Lisa were destroyed tomorrow, it would still exist in

Da Vinci's mind through all eternity. Lucifer and all of the fallen angels - though far from the light - continued to exist. If an individual should fall into that abyss they too exist in the expectation that they shall ultimately be reconciled.

7. WE BELIEVE THAT THE HIGHEST MORALITY IS CONTAINED IN THE MANDATE: "DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU."

The ancient adage "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," is less a suggestion than a moral imperative. In one form or another, the injunction is found in almost every belief system. It seems to be embedded in the human consciousness. As human beings functioning in a complex society, we are guarded by codes of conduct to ensure the well-being of the group and the security of the individual.

The funny thing about the universe is that we get back only what we give. Like a computer - garbage in, garbage out. We move through the experiences of daily life guided by a set of values. Most of the time we are unaware of just what is guiding our conduct and decisions. The more conscious we are in applying our value system, the greater control we have over life. The more spiritually attuned our value system, the greater our happiness. It is strange that such a simple rule provides such a profound formula for a happy and successful life. Of course, we all want to be treated honestly and fairly with kindness and respect. We all want to be loved. We all want to be accepted for the person we are, but that is a two-sided coin. "As you sow, so shall you reap." That is not a platitude, but a fact.

8. WE AFFIRM THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL, AND THAT WE CHOOSE OUR HAPPINESS OR UNHAPPINESS AS WE APPLY THE LAWS OF THE UNIVERSE.

The experiences of life tell us that success depends on the amount of effort we put into achieving our goals. Hard though it may be to accept, there are no "free lunches". We are responsible for the choices we make and the consequences of those choices. It is a comforting delusion to think that our decisions don't count; things are beyond our control; that we are beyond causality and immune from its effects; that we are free from the laws that bind the rest of the universe.

The truth is that our words and actions establish the direction and quality of our life. In every moment we are making choices and decisions which establish the framework of our life experience. We are responsible for the choices we make and the consequences arising from those choices. The blame game does not apply. Knowing the laws of the universe, we can utilize them to create a happy and healthy life. Need it be said that "ignorance of the law is no excuse."

9. WE AFFIRM THAT LIFE IS ETERNAL, AND THAT THE EXISTENCE AND PERSONAL IDENTITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL CONTINUE AFTER THE CHANGE CALLED DEATH.

The affirmation of the continuity of consciousness is a belief dating back to the dimmest past of human memory. The historical record supports the modern interpretation of the origin of religion stemming from ancient ancestor worship. We see death as a passage into another sphere, not the termination of the individual's consciousness. Even the most sophisticated religious cultures acknowledge this reality.

Who, having lost a loved one, has not had the experience of their presence? Who has not sought the intercession of a saint. or asked the departed loved one for guidance, or felt their love?

10. WE BELIEVE THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF GOD IN OUR LIFE IS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBORS AND OURSELVES.

The Infinite Creator must love Its creation and that love must be perfect and unconditional. Following the exhortation that "God is Love", Our Brother Jesus directed us to "Love one another, even as I have loved you." For those on a true spiritual path there is a singular reality - we are all one united by the Mind of the Infinite Creator. No condition, exception or illusion of separation can alter our obligation to love everyone as a manifestation of The All Itself. Since we can only give what we have, that unconditional love must begin with you.

11. WE ACCEPT THAT THE LIVING GIFTS OF PROPHECY AND HEALING, REPORTED IN ALL SACRED SCRIPTURE, ARE AN AFFIRMATION OF DIVINE SPIRIT WORKING THROUGH US.

The writings of the world's great religions are replete with examples of healing and prophecy, leaving no doubt as to the validity. The question is not are they real, but what is the ultimate source. By now, the answer should be simple. The Source of all is the source of all spiritual phenomena. We are the instruments of that power as we allow it to move through us. We are the vehicles by which the perfection of the creation is brought about. We are co-creators of our individual reality, and as such, we partake in the Divine Creative force. The gifts of the Spirit referred to by the Evangelist in Corinthians are not phenomena isolated to a distant age. They continue to manifest through all ages, especially our own, as the Spirit continues to work through the world. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but there is only one Spirit. There are diversities of powers, but it is the one God who works all things in all men," (Corinthians 12) Through Spirit, God imparts Its Divine Nature into our essence, enabling us to manifest the gifts of healing and prophecy.