

FROM THE DESK OF

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Thirty Five Years of Transcendental Meditation

By Reverend Jonathan Hutchison

Back in 1975, I was introduced to Transcendental Meditation (TM) by two folks who were fellow teachers of mine at the Pingry School in New Jersey. I was intrigued with TM then as a way to calm down, relax, and reflect. I was scattered in about as many ways as one could be and still be marginally productive. The pieces of my life experiences didn't seem to fit and thus, I began a journey of reflection and self-discovery.

I also watched with great interest as several teachers at Pingry persuaded the school administration to allow TM to be part of the curriculum. I experienced students of all dispositions and personalities come to find a peace and calmness in their lives through TM. Literally, lives were changed and students who could not focus or could not find direction began, through the practice of TM, to excel in their school work, athletics, and inter-personal skills.

At the same time I was watching students find their way to a path towards "enlightenment," I too, was beginning to change in ways both physical and spiritual. My high blood pressure began to subside. My eating habits changed for the better, my level of concern for other people began to change and became more compassionate. I was finding that being a friend began with "Being."

I remember hearing/seeing Maharishi in one of his early videos talk about the power that would be unleashed if one in one thousand people would learn to meditate and devote their lives to the journey towards compassion and enlightenment. His teaching gave me hope that this lifetime of mine and others could bring change to the planet.

Since my days in teaching, coaching, and administration, I have changed vocations and after significantly more schooling (an MA in Counseling, an MBA in Finance and my Masters of Divinity degree), I am now a full time United Methodist Clergy person, an elder, as we are called. I have been ordained to bring the news of Jesus, a most compassionate man, who changed the way folks saw the world and inter-related with that world. I continue to meditate and continue to find many similarities between the messages from Maharishi and from Jesus. Concepts such as empathy, working to end

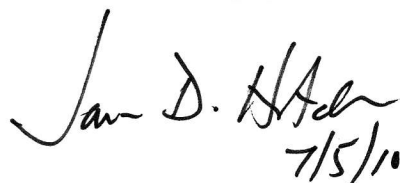
suffering, becoming re-united with what humankind has lost/misplaced, are all compatible topics I have experienced as I have continued my meditation and my study.

I find no conflict between TM and my faith. I find that TM continues to provide a way for me to find peaceful moments in my day as I meditate and as I serve. TM helps me prepare to meet the Divinity I have so longed to serve. TM slows me down, quiets me down so that I might be in the presence of the Holy, the Sacred, the One who unites all sentient beings. TM has led me to gain insight on how I actually see my faith in practical, self-less service.

One of my parishioners once asked me about something he had heard about the supposed "worshipping": bringing flowers and fruit to honor a picture of Maharishi's teacher and the tradition from which he came. I told him, as a former teacher, I have had students thank me for the lessons I helped them consider. I have been thanked by parents for helping their sons and daughters. The flowers, the fruit, and the incense used in the TM ceremony are used to symbolically give thanks to one's teachers, to show gratitude for the lessons and the effective technique of meditation they have offered. It is not intended to be a religious ceremony; it is a traditional way of saying "thank you." I see no conflict with this ceremony of gratitude in the tradition of TM and with my own faith tradition.

Just because I have chosen Jesus as my principle teacher does not mean that I cannot and do not have other teachers and other experiences that bring me closer to the Divine. I have taken the Christ way to follow but nothing in my practice of TM makes me doubt my chosen path to see Light and to be a servant in the work of bringing compassion to all beings. I think this is what, in large part, Maharishi has taught.

Thirty five years seems like such a short time. TM helps remind me it isn't the amount of time one lives that is the important criteria. As I have had many teachers, it is my hope that along the way, I have found something that I am worthy of sharing with others. TM is one of those life altering lessons for certain, that I choose to share with others.



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