

# INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES

## *Formal Curriculum 2009/2010*

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### COURSE CONTENT

*I understand that Inner Light Ministries is Omnifaith. Will I learn about lots of different religions in the Core Curriculum?*

No. At Inner Light we honor all paths that lead to Truth, however what we teach is metaphysics from a New Thought perspective influenced by our own Inner Light philosophy and experience. Although you may encounter a few materials during the four years of the course that come from different spiritual traditions, depending on the particular expertise and interests of individual faculty members, it is not our intent to provide you with a broad interfaith perspective or to teach a little bit about many different religious traditions. The principles we teach are Universal in that they can be found as threads of similar ideas running through most spiritual traditions, however we teach principles from a particular perspective, that of New Thought metaphysics.

*So are you teaching Religious Science?*

Not exclusively. Inner Light is an independent New Thought church and our Formal Curriculum program is also independent. The philosophy we teach is from the same tradition that produced Religious Science. Religious Science is in our lineage and we have many partner organizations which are Religious Science Churches. Although the overall philosophy of Religious Science is rooted in the same principles we teach, the particular approach and tools we use in our formal curriculum are unique to Inner Light, as is our specific interpretation and application of the Universal Spiritual Principles that are common to most, if not all New Thought organizations. One important difference between ILM's approach and that of Religious Science is that we understand ourselves to be part of a broader social justice movement. We are here to usher in global transformation as a result of personal healing. Our program does indeed support students in learning the application of principles in order to heal their own selves, AND we are doing so with the express purpose of influencing collective consciousness and equipping leaders for the current spiritual revolution.

*I am a pagan (or a Buddhist or...). Will this program work for me?*

Possibly. We have had people from various religious traditions successfully enroll in and complete our program. Again, we are teaching New Thought metaphysics, which are based in Universal Spiritual Principles. You may find some of our jargon or principles do not fit your current religious or spiritual ideas. With an open mind you will probably find the alignment. In our program we take the approach that Jesus the Christ took when he said "let he who has ears hear." We are not teaching dogma, but principles that each person can prove for her/himself. Some students have trouble with the use of the word "God." In order to maintain enrollment in the program, students such as these have generally come to a new understanding of the meaning of the word "God" than the popular one that triggered them. If you find that over time in the program you continue to have challenges reconciling our teachings with your philosophy and practice, please let us know. Students in the second year of Practitioner Training act in the capacity of ILM leadership, so at that point in the training we do expect that you will have reconciled any major conflicts.

*Is there homework? (or...What is a PTP?)*

"PTP" stands for "Practicing the Principles." Students must complete weekly take home assignments including readings, reflective writing assignments, and art. Several larger individual and/or group

projects are also due at various points in the program. PTPs are a critical component of the Formal Curriculum program. As students engage in the work of the PTPs, they go deeper in their understanding of course concepts, their capacity to heal, and their embodiment of spiritual principles and practice. PTPs are generally due the week after they are assigned; exceptions to this will be noted. It is essential that students complete their PTPs in a timely manner and hand them in regularly. This allows for timely feedback and support to students to enhance student understanding and growth. Students are strongly encouraged to turn in typed assignments. You will be provided with a binder for maintaining class assignments, PTPs, handouts, and other class materials. Assignments will be referenced in subsequent quarters and years of the program, so students are expected to keep their materials in good order. The PTPs and other assignments are given in lieu of exams. Advancement is dependent upon completion.

*I am looking for a program in which I will feel an experience of spiritual awakening, connection, and heart-opening in class on a regular basis. Is this the program for me?*

The Formal Curriculum program is not intended to be group therapy, an encounter group, or a process group for your personal healing. The program is designed to provide “Tools for Living” that students can apply to all aspects of their lives. Classes include many teaching modalities, including lecture, group discussion, small group activities, dyads, experiential activities, music, art, and prayer. A combination of activities allows for learning, deepening, and connecting. You may at times experience a spiritual awakening in class, however the class is not a substitute for you doing your own work. The classes provide a wonderful forum for learning, clarifying, and sharing, however the deep inner work of spiritual awakening primarily happens through the student's own engagement with the material, in completing the PTP assignments, through consistent spiritual practice, and through application of principles and tools in day to day life.

*I am very interested in religious studies. Is this primarily an academic program?*

No. While many aspects of the Formal Curriculum program resemble an academic program, for example study in classes, course texts and other readings, take-home assignments, pre-requisites, etc., this program is designed specifically to support spiritual healing and transformation. Yes, you will engage in study, and yes, you will learn new things. If you are only interested in engaging your mind, however, this may not be the program for you as it requires that students also be willing to engage at the level of the heart and soul and to examine and transform the way they are accustomed to being.

*What is an ILM Practitioner of Higher Consciousness?*

Practitioners are spiritual change agents in the world who commit to using the power of prayer to heal, uplift, and empower individual and collective consciousness. Practitioners embody the spiritual principles they have learned in the program; they BE the change in their moment to moment interactions.

*As an ILM Practitioner, will I have a license to practice spiritual counseling?*

No. The Formal Curriculum program does not result in a license to practice anything, rather it empowers you to use spiritual tools for healing and transformation for yourself and others. The primary tool of the Practitioner is prayer. Practitioners are not here to fix anyone, as everyone is already whole. Practitioners facilitate small groups such as PrayIN and Prosperity Circles, provide leadership to the various ministries, and engage in daily spiritual practice.

*What is PrayIN and how does it connect to the Formal Curriculum program?*

PrayIN is Inner Light's annual prayer campaign. In January and February of each year, we gather in small groups to learn about prayer, get support for praying, pray together, and deepen or begin a regular prayer practice. PrayIN is open to the entire community and is an integral part of the Formal Program for all students, regardless of the level of study. PrayIN groups meet at different times and days of the week

at various locations throughout the county and beyond. Each PrayIN group consists of a host, one or more facilitators, and a number of participants. These people meet once per week for five weeks on a set day and time at the same location every week. During PrayIN, students in the Formal Curriculum program participate in a PrayIN group in lieu of showing up to class. Core students are participants, first year Practitioner students are assigned to work as assistants to experienced facilitators (generally Practitioners or Ministers), and second year Practitioner students co-facilitate groups with each other.

## COMMITMENT

*What is required of me if I decide to take this course?*

Students enrolling in the Formal Curriculum program are asked to commit to one full academic year at a time and are expected to attend class regularly and participate actively in class discussions and activities. Completion of all assignments in a timely manner is also a requirement. Assignments are cumulative and build upon one another. Students who complete their PTPs as assigned are able to participate confidently in class discussions, understand subsequent assignments, and fully benefit from their participation in the Formal Curriculum program. Students who get behind typically find it very challenging to catch up, and may never have a sense that they have mastered a particular level of understanding and embodiment. Teaching Assistants are assigned to every class to support and encourage students and provide individual instruction when necessary. Beginning in the second year of the Core Curriculum, students are also given Service Learning assignments (see "Service Learning" on page 4). The Practitioner Training Program also includes two internships, one in the Prayer Ministry and one in the Families Ministry (see "Internships" on page 5).

*Can I just enroll in one quarter? I don't want to commit to a year.*

No. The classes in the various levels of the Formal Curriculum program are designed to build on each other and to be taken one after the other in succession. Students' consistent, regular engagement in the material of the course supports their spiritual growth and insures continuity of practice and understanding. Also, students in the program bond in their small groups and classes. It is disruptive to have people coming and going. Although some students do withdraw from the course during the year, if you already know that you don't intend to study with us in the Formal Curriculum program for the full year, this program is probably not a good match for you. We suggest you consider taking a class in ILM's Spiritual Development Program. These short term classes cover a wide variety of topics and provide many tools for spiritual growth and development. Please see the Spiritual Development Program schedule for current offerings.

## ENTERING AND PROGRESSING THROUGH THE PROGRAM

*How do I register for the Formal Curriculum Program?*

Please see the section entitled "Registration and Payment."

*How long does it take to progress through the program and become an Inner Light Practitioner?*

The Formal Curriculum program is a four year program, which includes a two year Core Curriculum and a two Year Practitioner Training program. If students progress through the program by successfully completing all program requirements, most people will complete in four years. Some people prefer to repeat one or more years of the program, and occasionally someone may be asked to repeat. The process of engaging in the material and the activity of the course is fulfilling and growth-promoting in and of itself. Matriculation through the program is neither a contest nor a race. If it appears that a student will benefit by repeating a year, that will be allowed, or in some instances encouraged. We also support students in progressing forward appropriately, however, and in considering whether to support a student's request to repeat rather than go forward, we would not collude with ideas that do not appear to be supported in Truth.

*What do you mean when you say "successfully completing all program requirements?"*

For all students, successful completion includes attendance at a minimum of 80% of classes and turning in 100% of PTP assignments. For second year Core students and all Practitioner students, there are also Service Learning requirements, and Practitioner students also have internships (see "Internships" on page 5). Practitioner students are also required to attend at least one New Thought conference at some point during the two year program. In addition, beginning in academic year 2009/10, there are three points along the Formal Curriculum journey at which student understanding and consciousness are assessed and a recommendation for progression is required for advancement (see "Assessments" on page 5).

*I took classes in the Formal Curriculum program previously, then took a break. Can I start at the next class from where I left off?*

If you would like to rejoin the program after a break of any length, please see the Education Minister. Several factors are taken into consideration when determining the placement of a returning student. These include how long the student has been gone from the program, what the student has been doing in the meantime, and how the program has changed since the student was enrolled. The Education Minister will gather salient information, then in consultation with faculty make a determination of what will best serve the student and the program.

*I am a Practitioner in another religious tradition (e.g. a Religious Science Practitioner). If I want to also be an Inner Light Practitioner, where do I start in the Formal Course sequence?*

Our Formal Curriculum program is NOT a strict parallel of Religious Science classes or any other program. Although Inner Light has come forth out of the same tradition as other New Thought churches, there are subtle nuances that distinguish our teachings from those of other organizations. There are also specific experiences that students in our program have that are not present in other curricula. It would be worthwhile and beneficial for everyone to experience the totality of our program starting with the first year of Core. Many people in your situation start in the first year of the Practitioner Training program. Please consult with the Education Ministry staff and faculty regarding an appropriate placement for you.

*I am an Inner Light Practitioner and I would like to audit one of the classes. May I?*

Because we have a sequential program and student bonding and commitment are essential components of the program, we cannot make accommodations for auditing classes. We ask that everyone who enrolls in the program have the intent to complete one year at minimum.

*I know I will be away for part of the academic year. Can I still take the class and progress through?*

Possibly. If this is a one time only situation for a relatively short term, please work out an arrangement with the lead instructor for your class. If this is an ongoing situation, please see the Education Minister to see if an arrangement can be made. Such arrangements, in either case, may include taking a make-up class, doing some type of project, independent study, or other arrangements.

*Is the annual retreat mandatory?*

The annual retreat is an integral part of the Formal Curriculum program and we ask that students make every effort to participate. The retreat provides an opportunity for connection and bonding across levels of the program. As we retreat together, we become a learning community in which we can experience support and understand that each one of us is an important part of a much larger whole.

## SERVICE LEARNING

*What is Service Learning?*

The Formal Curriculum program emphasizes service learning as an important element of spiritual practice.

Students are required to volunteer in one or more of ILM's ministries during the second year of Core and the Practitioner Training program. Service Learning can be thought of as the "lab" portion of class. By volunteering in ILM, students have the opportunity to put the principles they are learning into practice within the context of an organization which supports such embodiment, and provides a container for learning, healing, and growing. Students track their Service Learning hours on a form provided for that purpose and turn in the Service Learning Log at specified times during the academic year. Written reflections of Service Learning will also be assigned periodically.

*How much Service Learning is required?*

Core 2 students are required to fulfill 50 hours of Service Learning over the course of the academic year. Prac 1 students do 100 hours, and Prac 2 students do 120 hours. For the Practitioner students, a minimum of 30% of their service learning is required to be in the Prayer Ministry.

*I am very involved in volunteer service in another organization. Can I count my hours there as Service Learning?*

No. While we support students volunteering wherever they feel called, and acknowledge that there are many worthy organizations, some of our intended outcomes for the Service Learning requirement of the Formal Curriculum program are not addressed by service in other organizations. Community service in Inner Light serves as a learning laboratory for building conscious community. Your service learning requirement is not merely for your personal growth, but part of a Divine experiment in creating a diverse community committed to Oneness and inclusivity. As we work side by side with others in the Inner Light community, we encounter many opportunities to see what needs healing within us and to practically apply Universal Spiritual Principles within the context of a community that is aligned in our deep intent of co-ministry, reconciliation, empowerment, and Oneness.

## INTERNSHIPS

*I feel uncomfortable praying with people. Do I have to serve in the Prayer Ministry?*

As noted in the above section, a minimum of 30% of the Practitioner student's Service Learning takes place in the Prayer Ministry. When we pray, something powerful happens as we speak thought into form. We make a deposit into the ethers, animating our words and consciously connecting with a non-local, collective energy field that is transformative. Practitioners pray with people, and regular practice in the various programs of the Prayer Ministry is essential to the development of an ILM Practitioner. The Prayer Ministry internship includes several trainings in various Prayer Ministry programs, as well as specific volunteer assignments at various periods of study. For example you will have the opportunity to experience holding vigil for Sunday services or other ILM activities, praying over prayer cards, co-facilitating a PrayIN group and participating in PrayIN the Vision as part of your Prayer Ministry internship. You will also be trained in praying with people after the Sunday service, and will shadow an experienced Practitioner before praying with people yourself. You will have plenty of practice praying and will gain comfort over time.

*Are there any other internships?*

Yes. Beginning with the 2009/10 academic year, all Practitioner students will be required to do an internship with the Families Ministry. Children, youth, and families are special populations with needs of which all Practitioners should have some familiarity. This internship also provides an opportunity for students to explore issues of inclusivity and develop an empowerment model for work with diverse populations. Families Ministry staff will work with each student to determine an appropriate placement in one of a variety of specific roles developed for the Formal Curriculum program internship.

## ASSESSMENTS

*Are there any tests or other assessments?*

Also new for 2009/10 is the institution of three formal assessments of student progress at specified intervals within the program. The establishment of these assessments brings Inner Light's program into alignment with other New Thought practitioner training courses. The assessments will help students and faculty insure that course concepts are understood and outcomes are being met. They will prevent students from premature placement and matriculation. Following are the types of assessments, the points at which they are to be taken, and the first class to which each assessment applies:

- |                                 |                            |                           |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Core 2 Student Project Review | Prior to entry into Prac 1 | Core 2 class of 2009/2010 |
| • Practitioner Interview        | Prior to entry into Prac 2 | Prac 1 class of 2009/2010 |
| • Practitioner Panel            | Prior to Graduation        | Prac 2 class of 2009/2010 |

You will be given more details about these assessments in class and will be supported in preparing for the assessments.

## REGISTRATION & PAYMENT

### *How do I register?*

Pre-registering is the optimal method of registration. Pre-registration supports ILM in effective and efficient planning and insures your place in the class. In order to support you in pre-registration and pre-payment, we have created a number of ways for you to do this:

- online registration: Go to <http://innerlightministries.com>.
- in-person via paper registration form: Fill out and submit the registration form that is distributed in tandem with our Formal Curriculum brochure. You can do this on Sundays after the service at the Education Ministry table in the Social Hall, by putting your registration form and payment in an envelope and placing in the plate at the Sunday service, or by utilizing the self-serve area in the Social Hall at other times.
- via US Mail: Download the registration form from the ILM website, fill in, and send with payment to Inner Light Ministries, PO Box 1029, Soquel, CA 95073.

If you are unable to pre-register, you may take advantage of on-site registration and payment before the first class session. On the first date of class for Thursday evening sections, on-site registration and payment is from 6:00-6:45 p.m. For Friday morning sections, we are open for on-site registration and payment from 8:15-8:45 a.m., *also on the first date only*. If you intend to participate in on-site registration, please be sure to arrive with enough time to complete your registration before the registrar closes up fifteen minutes prior to the class start time.

Late registration is the final way to register, and presents the most challenges for timely and efficient program functioning. We ask that you plan ahead and only use late registration in case of emergency. To late register, use the same methods listed in the section on pre-registration. In order to take the class, you *must begin attending no later than the second session and must register and pay (at least the minimum deposit) no later than 24 hours before the start time of the third class session.* Please note, there is no on-site registration after the first class session.

Also, your registration is not complete until we receive your tuition payment or the minimum deposit.

### *What are the costs of participation?*

Tuition for the 2009/10 academic year is \$825, which breaks down to \$275 per quarter. Included in the tuition is a non-refundable deposit of \$50 per quarter plus costs for materials and a fall retreat. Students may prepay tuition for the entire year or quarterly. Students pre-registering and prepaying all tuition and fees at least three weeks before the first day of class, either for the full year or for a given quarter,

receive a discount of 5%.

*Is the deposit in addition to the \$825 annual tuition?*

No. The deposit is included in your tuition. It is not an additional cost.

*Are there any additional costs?*

Textbooks will be assigned during most quarters of the program. Generally the textbooks are made available in the ILM bookstore. You may also choose to invest some money in class projects.

*How and when do I pay?*

We strongly encourage pre-payment. Pre-payment completes your pre-registration process. You can use the same venues and methods for payment as for registration, i.e. the internet, in person, at the self-serve station or in the Sunday plate, and via US Mail. We accept cash, checks, Visa, Mastercard, and American Express. The minimum deposit for the Formal Curriculum program is \$50 per quarter.

*What if I can't afford it?*

We affirm the abundant nature of all of our students and fully expect that tuition and fees are paid in full for every student enrolled in the program. As part of the course, you will be learning to be an open channel for God's flow. You will also be healing old ideas of lack and limitation, ideas which conflict with Universal Truth. If you set your intent to pay, God will back that intent. Conversely, if you consistently engage the thought that you cannot afford the class, the Universe will confirm that idea instead. If you are not able to shift your consciousness to the point where you can believe you can afford the class, we suggest you enroll in an ILM Prosperity Circle or Abundance Ministry class instead of taking the Formal Curriculum program at this time.

*Can I make a payment plan?*

Yes. Some people pay for the whole year in advance. Others pay in three quarterly installments of \$275 each. If neither of these options is workable for you at this time, you can sign up for a payment plan and make two or three payments per quarter. Again, after the first class session, there will be no human registrars on site to take your payment; you must use the US mail, the self-serve area, the Sunday service plate, or pay via the internet according to the schedule in your payment agreement.

*Can I do a work trade?*

Generally we do not have the capacity to provide work trades for students in lieu of tuition. It costs money to run the program, and we have a fiduciary responsibility to insure faculty are paid and other program expenses are taken care of appropriately.

*Is there financial aid?*

We do not have a formal financial aid policy, however we do support and encourage classes to level the playing field through the use of "Yes We Can" funds. Each class is encouraged to donate into a fund that allocates money to students who are currently facing challenges in paying their tuition and fees. This gives students the opportunity to be sensitized to the needs of classmates with less privilege and also provides an opportunity for the class to contribute to everyone's success. Students are also sometimes moved to pay all or part of the tuition and fees for another student, anonymously or not. Other creative ideas have also been employed, such as fundraising efforts and tithes on money received through the application of principles learned in class.

*What is your withdrawal policy?*

Students who decide to withdraw from the program are asked to fill out a withdrawal form or otherwise

communicate their withdrawal in writing to insure that we can update our data. Students who withdraw before the fourth class can receive a prorated refund upon request. The amount of the refund is based on the percentage of sessions that have been initiated and/or completed at the time and date that the request is received in writing at ILM, and will also account for the non-refundable \$50 deposit. Students withdrawing after the fourth class has begun are ineligible for refunds of any portion of tuition paid.

## FACULTY

*Who are the faculty members?*

The faculty is composed of New Thought Ministers and Practitioners. Most of our faculty have gone through our Formal Curriculum program. Some are also trained in other New Thought traditions. Most classes have a lead instructor and one or more teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are generally Practitioners or students in our Practitioner program.

*Can I choose my own instructor?*

No. Most classes have two sections, one on Thursday evening and one on Friday morning. Instructors rotate through different assignments over time. Everyone can learn something from everyone else; we are all students and teachers of each other. As students progress through the program, they will encounter lead instructors and teaching assistants with a variety of teaching styles, strengths, and interests. Non-attachment is a spiritual practice.

*Will I get to study under Rev. Deborah Johnson?*

Rev. Deborah is on our Formal Curriculum program faculty. She lectures at a convocation for all of our students in the Formal Curriculum program two or more times per academic year. It is her intent to be the lead instructor for all students for the last half of the second year of Practitioner Training. We would caution people against joining the program for the express purpose of studying with Rev. Deborah, however, unless there is much more about the program that calls to you. Rev. Deborah's calling is very large and we cannot predict the future. Rev. Deborah also regularly teaches classes in the Spiritual Development Program and facilitates Continuing Education symposiums for Practitioners, so there are many other opportunities to study with her for those who have this interest.

## MISCELLANEOUS

*Do I have to belong to Inner Light to take the classes?*

Inner Light Ministries is not a membership organization. Anyone who is interested in learning the principles and capable of fulfilling the requirements is welcome to enroll in and take classes in the Formal Curriculum program.

*I want to join the Inner Light choir. Can I take the Core Curriculum to fulfill a choir pre-requisite?*

Yes, the first year of Core Curriculum does satisfy one of the choir pre-requisites. If this is the only reason you are interested in taking the Core program, however, we would urge you to consider carefully. Successful completion of the first year of Core requires regular attendance, class participation, and completion of all take-home assignments and class projects. Please see the Commitments section to be sure that this is a good fit for you.

*What are the distance learning options?*

At this point, the Formal Curriculum program is not offered via distance learning. Please join us in holding this possibility in prayer.

*Is childcare offered? Can I just bring my child when I need to or do I have to sign up for the whole time?*

The Families Ministry provides childcare to support parents in being able to access the Formal Curriculum

program, however it is only offered when there is sufficient interest and pre-registration. If you are interested in ongoing care for your child(ren) so you can take the class, be sure to pre-register for class as early as possible and indicate your interest in childcare. Generally childcare is offered for the Thursday evening sections only. If the Families Ministry is providing care for a given class, extra children can usually be accommodated, however we ask that you give notice to the childcare provider at least one week in advance of the need if at all possible.

*How and when do I sign up for childcare?*

If you need childcare to attend the Formal program, please indicate that need when you register. We need a minimum of two weeks notice in advance of the first class session for any quarter in which you will be requesting care.

*Is there a cost for childcare?*

Although we occasionally have volunteers providing childcare, the Education Ministry often pays for the services. We encourage all people who want to support access to our classes for families with young children to consider making a donation to help cover the costs of childcare.

*I want to get to know people in Inner Light. Is joining the Formal Curriculum program a good way to do this?*

Yes, and there are many other ways as well. Classes in the Formal Curriculum program tend to become bonded groups of Inner Light community members. It can be a phenomenal experience to go through so much healing and transformation with a consistent group of people. Although the Formal Curriculum program does provide this wonderful opportunity to connect and bond, again, we would caution against registering if this is your primary intent for joining the program. Please be sure that you want the whole package. Other possibilities for getting to know people in Inner Light include volunteering for one of our ministries, taking a Spiritual Development class, joining a Prosperity Circle or a PrayIN group, or attending community activities such as picnics and camping trips. For more information about current activities, please see the Good News insert in the Sunday bulletin.

*Can you accommodate special needs?*

If you have a special need, please speak with the Education Minister or faculty member to explore what kind of accommodation can be made.

*If you have questions not addressed here or in the course brochure, please contact the Education Ministry office: [education@innerlightministries.com](mailto:education@innerlightministries.com) or 831-465-9090x206.*