

Reaching out and touching in faith

When you "dial a blessing" and the Rev. Mary Alice Brown responds, you're likely to get enough inspiration to take you through a tough day.

"Release the past, the yesterdays. Begin anew today . . . Be good to yourself . . . Reach out . . . Let your hand be in the hand of God . . . Reach out to others to give and get radiating blessings. Do you have a smile? Give that . . . Have a comforting handshake? Give that . . . A silent prayer? Give that . . . Every person is needed and important in God's world . . ."

On another day, she might say, via Ma Bell: "God accepts you as you are. You grow within yourself. You thought you had to be someone else. In trying to please everyone, you please no one. God works through each one of us as we are."

Brown is minister of Unity Church of Christ in Teaneck, affiliated with the Unity School of Christianity in Unity Village, Mo. Founded by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore in Kansas City, Mo., in 1889, the Unity movement applies the teachings of Jesus to everyday life, primarily through its many publications and prayer network. The movement's best-known proponent, famous for his radio programs is Dr. Eric Butterworth, minister of the Unity Center of Practical Christianity in New York.

Brown was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa, in 1920, but the Depression and her father's illness caused the family to move first to Michigan and then to Kansas City, Mo. Her father was a Methodist and her mother a Catholic convert. She became aware of the Unity movement at age 11 when her grandmother gave her the popular Unity pamphlet, "Daily Word."

"My father, grandfather, and aunt had died within three months, and I was bewildered," Brown says. "I read the daily reflection in the booklet, and I

RELIGION IN SUBURBIA



Wilma Supik

couldn't believe anyone could have understood how I felt. It was like the voice of the Lord was whispering to me."

Through all the uprootings of her childhood, Brown had a dream — to settle in California. When she was 21, she bused it to Los Angeles, with \$10 in her pocket and the name of a friend of a friend. That contact led her to a room where she could stay in a house two blocks from a Unity church. Its minister became her spiritual guide, one of the great influences on her life.

"I was in awe of this lady, Rev. Mother Pearl Woods," Brown says. "She was a black woman, the first mentor of my life. Every time the church was open, I was there."

During World War II, she worked on the assembly line building warplanes for Lockheed Corp. She began attending Los Angeles City College. In her spare time, she took trumpet and piano lessons and helped out at her church.

After a marriage that ended in divorce, Brown and her three small sons moved to her native state, Iowa, and settled in Des Moines, where she attended nursing school and then worked as a licensed practical nurse to raise and educate her children.

When they were in college, her local Unity Church offered to send her to the seminary of the Unity School of Christianity in Missouri. "After 18 years of serving in every phase of church work — from nursery school to Sunday school to being on the board — I knew this is what God wanted me to do," she says. She graduated in 1975 and was ordained.

With few ministry openings, Brown faced a tough decision. "The seminary wanted me to go to New York City," she recalls. "The only thing I knew about New York was what I read in the newspapers. No way did I want to go there. Then one day, while driving, I knew God was saying to me, 'You're going to New York.'"

In November, she became minister of the Unity Church of Practical Christianity at 360 W. 125th St. "A friend told me I was like a sheep being led to slaughter," she says. "I never saw anything like this city. Riding the subway, everybody was afraid to look at you. I was totally devastated." However, she was befriended by a young Unity minister and his wife who every weekend invited her to their home. "Truly, without these two people I could not have stayed in New York," she says.

Shortly after getting an apartment in Corona in Queens, her car was stolen near her home. She didn't have insurance coverage or money to replace the car. She figured this too was in God's plan — "I must be without a car for a reason." Riding the subway, she began smiling at people — and trusting God more.

An illness in 1977 forced her to resign the church post and return to Des Moines. In a hospital there, she says, "I heard that voice saying, 'I sent you to New York to

know me.' I didn't know I can understand what she speaks."

Brown returned to the fall and worked at Butterworth's Unity Center in Teaneck, N.J., at 213 W. 58th St. She teaches some classes and does some choral work. Finally, a call came for an interim minister at the church. In 1982, she became a full-time minister.

Dialing a blessing

The 68-year-old minister began her services at 11 a.m. Sunday at 11 a.m. S. p.m. Wednesdays at 11 a.m. at 735 Rutland Ave., Teaneck, N.J. Her classes in Teaneck include pastoral counseling, the Dial-A-Blessing (6122) early every morning, and an uplifting ministry of getting an uplifting message to work.

"I'm not really the fearful one," she says. "The teacher is you, the hope of glory we call it the School of Living — you are in the process of spiritual learning. As you read the scriptures, you know the inner meaning to them. It lets you live it in a practical way. You learn how to live your life."

In counseling, Brown says, "I want to be the fearful: 'I want to be the one that you may be in a situation but you always have a way out. You just must trust in God.'"

"At first, I thought I was going to New York," she said. "I love New York. I love the city. I love the people. I've got to dig in to it. I come from farm country. I love plants and gardens. The Lord has put me in a situation. I don't know what to do next. But I know I have to serve him next. But I know I have to go everywhere to know what I need to fight. The Lord means for us to love c



DIRECTORY OF

Religious Services

Touching in faith

LIBURBIA

When they were in college, her Unity Church offered to send her to the seminary of the Unity School of Christianity in Missouri. After 18 years of serving in every aspect of church work — from Sunday school to Sunday school to on the board — I knew this was what God wanted me to do," she says. She graduated in 1975 and was ordained.

When few ministry openings, she faced a tough decision. "The seminary wanted me to go to New York City," she recalls. "The only thing I knew about New York was what I read in the newspapers. I said, 'Why did I want to go there?' One day, while driving, I felt God was saying to me, 'I am going to New York.'"

In November, she became minister of the Unity Church of Practical Christianity at 360 W. 125th St. A friend told me I was like a lamb being led to slaughter," she says. "I never saw anything like this. Riding the subway, everybody was afraid to look at you. I was totally devastated." However, she was befriended by a young minister and his wife who one weekend invited her to their home. "Truly, without these two people I could not have stayed in New York," she says.

Shortly after getting an apartment in Corona in Queens, her car was stolen near her home. She did not have insurance coverage or money to replace the car. She figured his too was in God's plan — she must be without a car for a reason. Riding the subway, she befriended people — and trusted them more.

An illness in 1977 forced her to leave the church post and return to Moines. In a hospital there, she says, "I heard that voice say, 'I sent you to New York to

know me.' I didn't need any more; I can understand when the Spirit speaks."

Brown returned to New York in the fall and worked at Butterworth's Unity Center of New York City, 213 W. 58th St., teaching some classes and doing clerical chores. Finally, a call came for an interim minister at the Teaneck church. In 1982, she became its full-time minister.

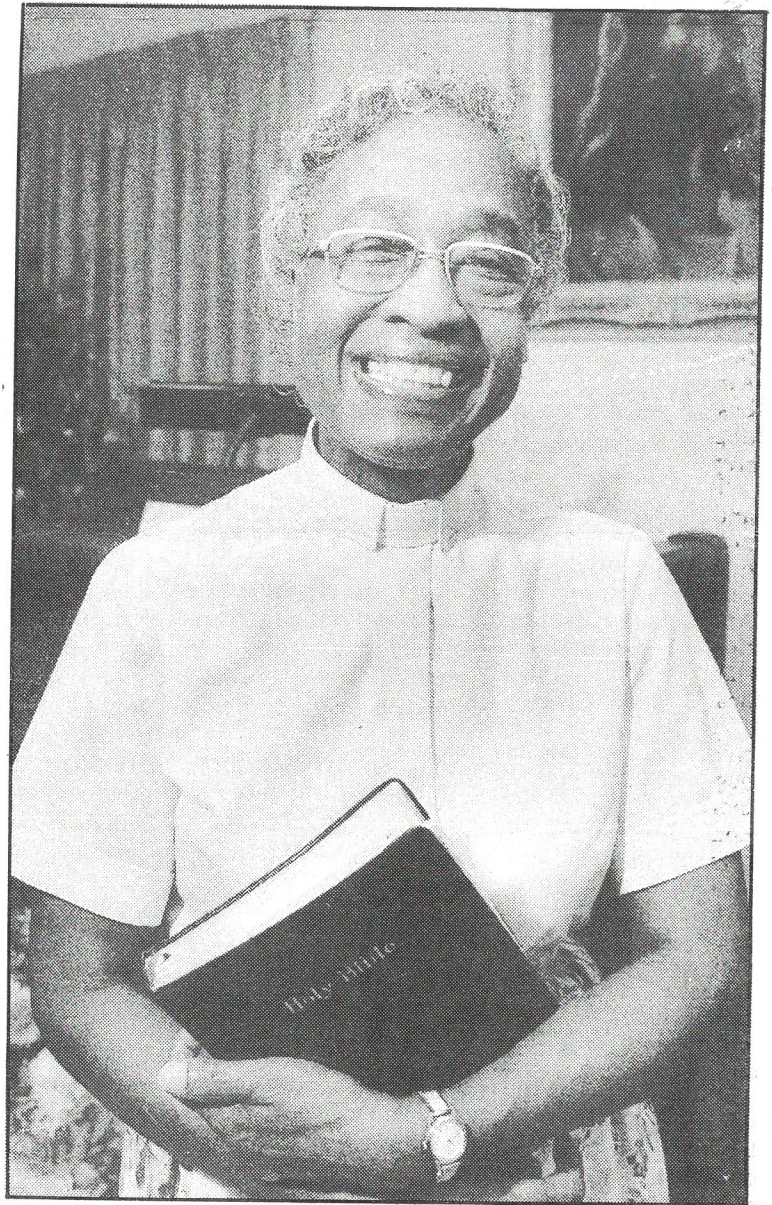
Dialing a blessing

The 68-year-old minister leads services at 11 a.m. Sundays and 8 p.m. Wednesdays at the church at 735 Rutland Ave., also teaches Unity classes in Teaneck and at Butterworth's center, and does pastoral counseling. She changes the Dial-A-Blessing tape (836-6122) early every morning so callers get an uplifting message before going to work.

"I'm not really the teacher," she says. "The teacher is the Christ in you, the hope of glory. In Unity — we call it the School of Christianity — you are in the school of spiritual learning. As you read the scriptures, you know there is an inner meaning to the words that lets you live it in a practical way. You learn how to live a life that is good."

In counseling, Brown assures the fearful: "I want you to know that you may be in a lonely place, but you always have God near. You just must trust in him."

"At first, I thought I would die in New York," she admits. "Now I love New York. I love New Jersey, too. I've got to dig in the earth — I come from farm country, and I love plants and gardening. The Lord has put me in the perfect places. I don't know where I'll serve him next. But I want people everywhere to know there is no need to fight. The Lord really means for us to love one another."



STEVE HOCKSTEIN/THE RECORD

“ Do you have a smile? Give that . . . Have a comforting handshake? Give that . . . A silent prayer? Give that . . . Every person is needed and important in God's world. ”

The Rev. Mary Alice Brown
Dial-A-Blessing

DRY OF

gious Services

