

Gavin Hamnett's Personal Growth: Recreation of the Self Seminar

Cabot W. Peterson
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Gavin Hamnett

BARRYTOWN - On Saturday, October 17, Pastor Gavin Hamnett of the Mid-Hudson Valley Family Church (MHVFC) will facilitate a seminar entitled "Personal Growth: Recreation of the Self - Getting Your Greatness," to be held at the historic Massena House on the Barrytown campus of the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS).

The seminar will run from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a break for lunch. The cost of the one-day event is \$50 per person/\$30 for MHVFC members; lunch is included in the cost. Registration is required and will be limited to 16 people. To register contact Gavin. Anyone needing overnight accommodations can contact Kate Korda.

Combining the teachings and models of human behavior developed by John Eisman (Self Model of Human Systems), Greg Baer (Real Love Model), and the Unification Model, the seminar will focus on ways of pursuing the "Ideal Self" using practical applications.

In a sense the seminar is the culmination of a long spiritual journey undertaken by Gavin nearly four decades ago when he first left his native Scotland. On summer holiday from his studies as a pre-med student at the University of St. Andrews in 1979, he met and joined the Creative Community Project in Oakland, California.

"I was a rabid atheist when I first heard the (Divine) Principle," said Gavin. "Then I had a three-hour conversion experience. I was always looking for spiritual food growing up, but I was surprised at the content of the Principle. I quickly realized that all my understanding could be accomplished with the Divine Principle."

Gavin remained in Oakland for the next eight months, then, at his father's behest, he returned to his medical studies for another year, before dropping out again and returning to Oakland. His three years of medical school, however, were enough to qualify him for his Bachelor of Science degree in Anatomy & Physiology from St. Andrews in 1981.

Over the next several years Gavin had stops in Unification Church centers in the Bay Area, Boston, New York City and Albany, as well as a two-year stint on national mobile fundraising teams (MFT). During this time he also participated in the 2,075 couple Marriage Blessing with his wife, Cindy, at Madison Square Garden in 1982.

A short time later Gavin had two experiences that would impact his life in a profound way. The first was counseling that he and Cindy received from Patricia Detlefsen on their Blessing when they lived in the Bay Area. Patricia continues to run the Shimjung Healing Center in Valley Springs, CA.

"She had a major influence in our Blessing with her counseling," said Gavin. "She was pioneering a realm of interface between psychology and spirituality that was very unique in the church at the time. It was a good experience and very helpful in our marriage."

His path toward counseling was further influenced when, while doing a 7-day fast, he read the groundbreaking book by M. Scott Peck, "The Road Less Traveled," pricking his interest in the blending of psychology and spirituality even more.

"I thought 'WOW', explaining the mind in psychological terms and everyday metaphors. The book blew me away because it's a powerful interface between psychology and spirituality. It turned me on to the psychological world."

Gavin's journey next took him to UTS, where he became a student in the fall of 1989. During his stay at UTS he felt something changing in his spiritual life and his outlook on life.

"UTS broadened my mind greatly," said Gavin. "Something shifted, I felt something shift and I got the concept of what is a worldview. I liked Dr. Kieran Scott because he was in touch with real contemporary issues. It was the same with Dr. Sebastian Matczak in that he was in touch with philosophical issues."

Following his graduation in 1991, he and Cindy moved to New Orleans for the next two years. Returning to the east coast, Gavin spent the next four years at the University of Bridgeport; the first two years

earning a Master of Science degree in counseling and two more years as a campus minister and English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher.

After their time in Bridgeport, he and Cindy moved to the Ithaca, New York area and opened a crafts business, which they ran for the next four years. Gavin then spent the next two years doing drug counseling near Ithaca working with recovering heroin addicts.

It was at this time that he and Cindy traveled to China and adopted their daughter, Raya, who is now 14.

“Wanting a change,” as Gavin put it, he then applied for the position of pastor at the MHVFC and was chosen for the position. So, in 2005, he, Cindy and Raya packed up and moved to Barrytown to become the pastor of the MHVFC.

This is another point at which Gavin’s journey took a new road, as he began to put his training in counseling to use as a pastor, as well as expanding his own understanding of the field with additional classes and workshops.

“Counseling helped me become aware of who I was and that was a much more powerful and rewarding place to operate from. It also gave me more confidence to work as a pastor. I feel my role as a pastor is to keep my eye on and search out a vision of spiritual health centered on Father’s teaching.”

In 2008 Gavin took a two-year course over several long weekends in “Hakomi,” a Native American philosophy aligned with the principle of what is termed “organicity,” which Gavin describes as, “something very much living and alive in you trying to move you toward wholeness. Through the practice of non-violence you are moved toward organicity, which is the same as what we (Unificationists) call the original mind. It is the original mind centered on truth, which becomes the blueprint for the ideal. Once you move into this realm and realize that everyone has an original mind it makes it very difficult to harm another person because now you see them as a part of the whole, a part of yourself.”

More recently, Gavin attended a four-day training seminar in the spring of 2015 with Jon Eisman, author of the instruction manual, “Re-Creation of the Self Model of Human Systems (R-CS),” which posits that, as Gavin explains, “there is a whole, always existing self within each person. However, in psychology this is very radical. He’s (Eisman) putting out work that’s accessible to people in the world whatever field they’re in.”

Through the many studies and encounters on his own path, Gavin has come to the realization that counseling is a lot more than just “listening” to another person, whatever issue may come up.

“I’m not scared of most problems that people bring to me. I’m fairly confident that whatever issue it is I can deal with it. The real key is that the counselor not only ‘listens,’ but ‘gets’ who you are. They get you, they ‘see’ you. They understand the breadth of soul it takes to see who you really are.”

Gavin has been utilizing his skill and the application of counseling therapies, like the RCS (Re-Creation of the Self) model pioneered by Eisman, for the past four years as a counselor in Poughkeepsie working with recovering heroin and cocaine addicts, and has met with success.

“The RCS method is about personal growth, trying to get people connected to who they are. It’s good, people like it.”