

Meet CSL's New Spiritual Leader



Dr. Edward Viljoen serves as the new spiritual leader at Centers for Spiritual Living.

Above: Viljoen with his husband, Kevin.

At right: Past Spiritual Leader Dr. Kenn Gordon welcomes Viljoen to his new role.



Dr. Edward Viljoen

NUDGED ONTO THE SKINNY BRANCH



BY Julie Mierau

In accepting the role of spiritual leader for Centers for Spiritual Living, Dr. Edward Viljoen says, “My intuition nudged me onto the skinny branch because although I believed I have the experience and qualifications for the position, I wrestled with my inclination to continue working in the background.

“I felt a calling,” he adds, “a duty and an opportunity to give back something of what I’ve received from this teaching. I felt the push-and-pull dynamic that often happens between a calling and the human desire to stay in the comfort zone. My hesitancy about applying for the position was resolved when I learned I could stay in my pulpit in Santa Rosa and, with the support of my local community, do this work at the same time. Nevertheless, it was and is both an honor and a leap of faith for me.”

Finding His Tribe

Viljoen’s journey to Religious Science strikes a familiar chord within the movement. “I was in an airport bookstore,” he says, “and I was drawn to a book because of its title and the 1970s-era graphics. I bought it almost as an afterthought.”

That book — “A New Design for Living” — drew him in, and he read it cover to cover. Twice.

He admits that the name “Religious Science” sounded ominous, and he took some time before venturing into a local church. As the universe would have it, there was a church in Burbank, California, right across the street from his supermarket. When he took a chance and went inside, the experience opened a world of new opportunities for him. “I found my people,” he says.

After enrolling in practitioner training, he says, “I found I couldn’t stop learning. And then I discovered a person could also study to be a minister, which I found by an accidental enrollment.”

Viljoen became a new minister and practitioner at the height of the world AIDS crisis and discovered that the principles of Science of Mind apply in our brightest and our darkest times. He says, “The world and our movement are facing new and unique pressures. Having been polished as a new minister during the AIDS crisis prepared me to accept people in their human experience while simultaneously believing in their spiritual wholeness.”

Focused on Intentional Inclusion

Viljoen emigrated to the United States from his native South Africa 35 years ago and is now a U.S. citizen. His family includes his in-laws, husband Kevin, and their dog, Cooper.

Perhaps because of his unique background, Viljoen sees diversity as an important value for Centers for Spiritual Living. The term he uses is “intentional inclusion.”

“Inclusion goes beyond just saying that everyone is welcome,” he explains. “Our leadership is committed to looking for the populations that are underrepresented in our movement, and we are intentionally inviting them to the table. Inclusion requires more effort than merely hanging out a welcome sign. The welcome sign hanging in our hearts and minds must match the welcome sign that hangs on our doors.”

He points to the Diversity Inclusion Commission as the group setting the direction for diversity as an organizational value. “We have to assess how we measure up to our shared values,” he says. “We have to determine



We have to determine how we can represent our teachings in a broader community.

Bhutan 2019

how we can represent our teachings in a broader community. We have to look at how we intentionally invite new voices into our groups.”

Viljoen is interested in opening up the traditional power dynamics of a spiritual community that holds one person, or group, in leadership. He is interested in including the individuals who make up the heart and soul of the movement — the laypeople — who tend to be underrepresented.

“We are welcoming,” he says, “and we want to grow into being intentionally including.”

Guided by Vision

When the Santa Rosa congregation embraced CSL’s vision of a world that works for everyone, opportunities began to present themselves to grow into that vision. Recently, an unsheltered homeless encampment developed across the street from the center. Reaching out to the population was controversial, but the congregation decided they could not look away and do nothing.



Left: Dr. Gladys Gonzales-Vigil Zorrilla and Viljoen at a CSL event in Peru. Below: Viljoen races in the 2018 AIDS Life Cycle. Bottom: Viljoen shares a hug with Rev. Andriette Earl.



NUDGED ONTO THE SKINNY BRANCH

Viljoen points to this example of how life responds to our intentions. "Because organizationally we value inclusiveness and diversity," he says, "we are repeatedly being led to look at where that isn't yet showing up. This dissonance between values and practice comes to our attention because we have a high vision, and not because we are broken."

He believes that to create a world that works for everyone, we must remove from our hearts and our minds whatever is preventing that vision. Viljoen believes in the global vision, and he admits that it can be inspiring and disturbing when looked at from both the metaphysical and social aspects where there remain lots of room for improvement and inclusion.

Viljoen succeeds Dr. Kenn Gordon, CSL's previous spiritual leader. Dr. Sharon Hudson, CSL's field leader, will speak at local centers and be the inward-facing leader. Viljoen will speak at events of other organizations, also focusing on writing and social media outreach, as the outward-facing leader.

His priority will be to "make a case for Science of Mind in New Thought organizations and beyond."

When asked what his vision is, then, for the organization, he responds, "Our organization already has a vision. It is my task to bring our global vision to life in my words and my interactions with people."

Viljoen will continue to be the minister of the Center for Spiritual Living Santa Rosa, where he has served for more than 25 years. ☘

*Viljoen through the years:
Playing the flute in his teens,
at age 18 and in his
ministerial ordination robe.*



The Holmes Institute

World-renown Educators



Visit HolmesInstitute.edu
for your 2020 catalog.

*Centers for
Spiritual Living™
Holmes Institute*



AMIT GOSWAMI

Author and scholar
featured in the movie
"What the Bleep"



JEFFERY MISHLOVE

Consciousness
author and creator
of Noetic Science
organization
interviews



MARTIN ROSSMAN

Featured on PBS,
author of numerous
books on healing
with the mind



ROBERT FRAGER

Co-founder of the
Institute of Trans-
personal Psychology,
a pioneer in this
field of study

**What makes Holmes Institute
the right fit for your evolution?**

- Learn from your home or office with our Master's Degree in Consciousness Studies or our Certificate in Spiritual Education
- We are accredited through the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC)
- Areas of emphasis include Leadership, World Religions, Philosophy, Psychology, Science and Spirituality
- Open to anyone who qualifies and currently holds any Bachelor's Degree
- Programs offered entirely through distance education (audio/video conferencing)
- Build global community with like-minded students

IN-DEPTH SPIRITUAL EDUCATION, YOUR WAY



VISIT HolmesInstitute.edu
EMAIL Info@HolmesInstitute.edu