Gravity

"The same dynamics that created the galaxies created the stars and the oceans. The powers that build the universe are ultimately mysterious, issuing forth from and operating out of mystery. They are the most awesome and numinous reality in the universe. Humans are these dynamics, brought into self-awareness, becoming now fully aware of our creative work." — Brian Swimme

Yesterday, while seated on a metal folding chair, I continued to allow the word gravity to have its way with me—as a writer this often happens: a word bites into my mind, and I wrestle with its meaning and significance for hours, days, or even months. An oil painting of a horse hung on the white wall, above my right shoulder. In the room, collective bargaining between teacher and support staff unions and a school district were transpiring. The negotiation table exchange was heated. Thirteen months had passed in this process. Mediation and advisory arbitration had taken place. I’ve been present through all of it.

I am grateful for the decades of contemplative practices that unintentionally trained me and continue to provide me the skills to be present, listen to a person or issue, and in my work as a communications specialist for a school district, craft a compassionate, accurate message for the public who are concerned with issues of grave importance and shared humanity.

Polarization cuts deep and can fracture relationships. Sitting beneath that horse painting, I practiced deep, rhythmic breathing. Still thinking of gravity, I witnessed a contemptible verbal exchange transpiring several feet from me. Suddenly, without premeditation, I stood up, placed my notepad and pen on my chair, and found myself walking calmly toward the open door, out of the room, ignoring the watching eyes from others who rimmed the room, and like me, were seated against the wall. The exchange at the table continued, uninterrupted.

Step by step down the empty hallway, I wondered at the gravity that keeps me or you seated in place, until the dynamic convergence of mind, heart, and soul can no longer tolerate what is occurring. I deliberated the gravity of the contract being negotiated, and the gravity of a need for education, for all people.

I arrived home late that night, and turned to the sky, giving thanks to the energy of the universe which renews me and you, providing gravity to keep us in time and place. Later, I know my spiritual guide will listen carefully to my story, and in the listening, together we will comprehend gravity—speaking, teaching, and leading. And when tears form, pricking my eyes due to the chaos in our world, gravity will slide them down my cheeks, to the sturdy earth.

—Pegge Erkeneff

SEEDS OF INTEREST:
- Field Guide: Noticing the Conversation in Our Hearts
- Poem: Listen
- Book Review: My Soul Feels Lean: Poems of Loss and Restoration
- Global Resources
- Poem: Prayer of Silence
- Ask Owl
Imaginal Trackers Institute and River Rock Studio present:

Ways of Seeing

My soul can find no staircase to heaven
unless it be through earth’s loveliness.
—Michelangelo

The natural world is our best teacher, guide, and healer. When we look and listen with our hearts, nature’s ancestral energy bursts forth in living colours, mirroring itself in us.

During this week of sumptuous solitude situated in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies we will explore our inner and outer nature. Through sacred play, as taught by the animals, and through ancestral forms of art making, we will experience new ways of seeing and be transformed at the threshold of Nature’s longing.

Absolutely no previous art experience required! Excellent for spiritual directors, pastoral counselors, therapists, educators and artists.

**Date:** July 29-Aug. 2, 2013

**Location:** River Rock Studio

Alberta, Canada

**Facilitators:**

Madeline Rugh, PhD ATR-BC

Stranj Lander King, MA ATR-BC

**Contact:**

Ursula Reynolds @ 403-932-1351

reynolds@riverrockstudio.com

Madeline Rugh - mrugh@cox.net

www.strawberrymooncounselling.com

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All in the Flow:
The enneagram’s gift to prayerfulness

da PDF e-version

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This beautiful presentation of the enneagram by Australian spiritual director and spirituality writer Patrick Oliver takes as its inspiration the entreaty of St Clare of Assisi to “gaze upon the cross”. “All in the Flow” doesn’t approach the enneagram clinically or psychologically, but lets it be a way for us to become prayerfully aware of grace already present within us and around us.

To purchase by a PDF e-version of “All in the Flow: the enneagram’s gift to prayerfulness”, simply contact Patrick by email requesting a copy. Once he receives your email, he’ll send you an invoice through which you can pay by credit card. The three PDF documents which comprise “All in the Flow” will then be emailed to you. Patrick’s address is [patrickoliver01@gmail.com](mailto:patrickoliver01@gmail.com).

His website is [www.patrickoliver.net.au](http://www.patrickoliver.net.au).

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**FUNDRAISING ACADEMY**

**Is the bright future of your organization’s ministry and service at odds with your financial outlook? Imagine feeling joyful about generating the revenue necessary to sustain your work!**

**Designed especially for leaders from retreat centers and formation programs, the SDI Fundraising Academy will enable participants to:**

- Name which prospects are your strongest allies for supporting your work
- Prioritize your work to raise the most money with the least effort
- Identify five ways to ensure high retention of supporters over time

**Looking for a three-day fundraising intensive? The SDI Fundraising Academy is designed to complement the Fundraising from the Heart workshop by Lynne Twist offered by Upaya Zen Center the preceding weekend.**

**INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION | [WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG](http://WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG)**

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**FUNDRAISING ACADEMY**

**Monday, July 1, 2013**

9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Santa Fe,
New Mexico, USA

Presenter: Susan Howlett
"T"hough we live much of our lives outside, in action and engagement with the world, the deeper impact of what happens is registered in the narrative of the heart. Because the heart dwells in unattended dark, we often forget its sublime sensitivity to everything that is happening to us. Without our ever noticing, the heart absorbs the joy of things and also their pain and care. Within us, therefore, a burdening can accrue. For this reason it is wise now and again to tune in to your heart and listen for what it carries.

– John O’Donohue, To Bless the Space Between Us

When is the last time you tuned in to your heart and listened for what it carries? The more we practice listening to the conversation in our own hearts, the better prepared we are to tune in to others’ hearts and listen for what their hearts carry. Moreover, being still, getting quiet and listening within increases our attunement to the voice that dwells deep in our hearts. An array of faith traditions emphasizes the fundamental role of this inner sanctum. Hindu yogis refer to this interior place where the sacred dwells as guha—the cave of the heart. The cave of the heart is a place deep within each of us known only to God. When we enter this cave in the depth of our hearts through various forms of prayer and meditation, we encounter the transcendent Mystery revealed in all of creation. This is not to suggest that the transcendent Mystery can be contained in our hearts; rather, this ineffable Mystery revealed in all of creation makes itself known in our hearts.

When we take time on a regular, preferably daily, basis to enter the cave of our heart and listen, we increase the likelihood that we will maintain awareness of the divine presence within our hearts in the midst of daily activities. As we become more mindful of the conversation in our own hearts—our joys, griefs, hopes and concerns—we are more likely to speak the truth of our heart and to listen for the voice of the true self yearning to be revealed in another’s heart.

REFLECT: LISTENING TO THE CONVERSATION IN YOUR HEART

Over the course of the next day or week, take time to enter the cave of your heart and listen. You may find it helpful to experiment with one or more of the following approaches as catalysts for evoking this inner conversation.

- Go for a walk or sit quietly in a natural setting
- Draw or paint a picture that captures the image(s) in your heart
- Play a favorite song, or watch one of your favorite movies, that speaks to your heart.

PONDER: WHAT IS MY HEART YEARNING FOR IN THIS MOMENT?

—Diane M. Millis, PhD, is a spiritual director, inspirational speaker, and founder of the Journey Conversations Project based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. This article is an excerpt from her book, Conversation: The Sacred Art—Practicing Presence in an Age of Distraction (Skylight Paths Publishing, www.skylightpaths.com, 2013.)
Listen

Listen.
It may not take as long as a blink.
There is the small deep sound of things worthwhile
rustling amongst the telephone lines
the garbage trucks and ambulance sirens;
contrails across the sky scratch the lens of space
they fade and melt like
pain in birth and great joy—
I know
there is other pain
(lasting as long as you want)
even though you believe it is beyond your control
it is one of the things firmly in your control;
choose then to listen—
the quiet offer
of inner peace
regardless of the world
and its worst.
Inside there is a forest
and vast mountains
surrounded by oceans deep with healing,
Just listen.
— Leslie Aguillard [Colorado, USA]
A collection of one-hundred-and-six poems, plus an introductory poem, My Soul; Joyce Rupp, author of artful prayers, retreats, and dozens of books offers a new treat to readers. Deeply personal and revealing, this meditative collection offers a glimpse into the heart and mind of Rupp’s own journey of more than six decades. In My Soul Feels Lean: Poems of Loss and Restoration, Rupp shares fifty-three poems in the first half of the book, “Loss,” and an additional fifty-three in “Restoration.” The whole volume feels like a prayer of sorts; each poem conveys seeking, wrestling, introspection, insight, and compassion.

Rupp explains, “My soul’s leanness comes about through various sources of impermanence, many of them not of my preference or decision, such as the death of dear ones, changes in my physical demeanor, penetrating questions regarding my cherished beliefs, and upsets in human relationships. I did not want to have someone or something leave me without my choosing” (5). Indeed, the poems reveal a mature awareness and convey the lean angst and grief of loss. Rupp writes, “Experience has taught me that when life brings loss, I can either receive this situation openly or else clumsily trip over it by my resistant response. If I refuse to let go, my personal growth slows down. If I yield to the change being asked of me, grief-like emotions may still result, but their shape and quality will not be as severe because less energy is spent on revisiting the change” (5).

Poems of loss include lines such as this in Refusal: “You finally realize / you cannot force-feed her. / You cannot shove your experience / into someone else, no matter / how much you care” (20).

Poems of restoration invite acceptance and trust. Rupp writes, “Restoration and revitalization of some form follows our time of loss if we allow ourselves to engage in the required letting go. We won’t be able to reestablish what we once had but we will receive some new seed of growth to take us further on the road of personal transformation” (85). Weaving images of nature or ordinary daily activity into poetry, she writes in On My Way From Mankato to St. Paul, “The crust on my preoccupied heart / fell off / quite unexpectedly / while driving on an almost empty interstate” (115). This collection will be helpful to everyone who experiences loss, desires renewal, and understands our shared humanity. Rupp’s voice is vulnerable and authentic, providing a path of permission for the reader to experience his or her own expression of emotion.
Poem Prayer of Silence

I can come close. The quiet roaring like a wind
Blows in my mind. Then, I, observing it begin
To think of how it is, and crash. As if I sinned,
Shame rises up to fill me, silence at an end.
My thoughts race on to what I’ve done and have not done.
Lost in this thick stupor of culpability
My heart gets entangled in struggles lost or won
Encircled by the noise of my mortality.

I start again. Let go, I’ve heard; and listen hard;
A word may come curtailing the cacophony,
Drawing God’s purpose and presence beneath my guard
To empty out my grief. I cease the litany,
Listen once again to stormy silence. A word,
No more. Words begin to rise; which one? I question
Seeking to learn, and soon am overcome. Absurd
How hard it is to cease to be; such frustration.

As close as sleep, and yet as far away as death
(Distant kept, at least, within our minds), quietness
Is not a gift we easily receive. A breath
Away, still just past the reach of our relentless
Thinking, doing, feeling, all that we call being.

So, drawn to dying now, I quiver with a fear
But also a familiar hope. And now seeing
End to me, in the emptiness, I find God near.

Peter W. Wenner [Massachusetts, USA]
Question: I’m seeking a spiritual guide or director, and I noticed on the Spiritual Directors International website that I should interview at least two or three people. Shouldn’t a spiritual guide interview me? Why would I want to talk to a few people?

Hoot Hoot: Thank you for your great question! First of all, the decision to find a spiritual director is rising in you, thus, you are the seeker initiating the relationship. When you imagine yourself interviewing someone, it is helpful to think in terms of a conversation, a time to ask questions, and dialogue. An initial interview will offer both of you time to assess and discern. Your relationship with your spiritual director or spiritual guide is a very important, confidential, and often a cherished, significant relationship. You and the person you ask to accompany you will want to prayerfully discern if meeting together will be a good match. So, the initial conversation or interview is important. Also, if after the interview you both determine that you will meet on an ongoing basis, it is a good practice to mutually agree to assess the relationship every three to six months.

Why is it important to interview at least two or three people? Finding a spiritual director is a very personal and spiritual quest. Remember, God (or Ultimate Reality or a Higher Power) is the true spiritual guide. A spiritual director will companion you as you deepen your relationship with God. Conversing with at least two people will give you a sense of personality and style differences. You will want to talk about what draws you to spiritual guidance at this particular time in your life. Notice how comfortable, or uncomfortable you are speaking about faith, contemplative practices, your yearnings and beliefs. You will not share your spiritual story, current struggles or joys during this initial conversation. Ethically, a spiritual director will want to make sure you feel free to depart from the initial interview and have no regrets if you never speak again.

Please take reasonable steps to verify the competency of any potential spiritual director. Valuable questions to ask when you meet with a potential spiritual guide include:

- What enrichment, spiritual formation, and theological education do you have in spiritual direction?
- What is your personal experience tending your own prayer, meditation, and contemplative life?
- What is your experience as a spiritual director? How many years? In what environments? What are you most interested in spiritually?
- How do you continue your education and supervision for your spiritual direction ministry?
- What ethical guidelines do you abide by, such as those published by Spiritual Directors International? Have you ever been accused or convicted of misconduct?
- What type of engagement agreement will we establish to clarify roles and responsibilities in our spiritual direction relationship, such as samples provided to members of Spiritual Directors International?

Interviewing a potential spiritual director is a way to carefully listen to the way the spirit is guiding you in your selection process. Questions for your personal reflection as you seek a spiritual guide are posted on the Spiritual Directors International website, and a free “How to Seek and Find a Spiritual Director” teleconference is offered four times each year. Your spiritual director is your choice.

If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail Listen@sdiwold.org.
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“Tending the holy around the world and across traditions ...
Al servicio de lo sacro alrededor del mundo y a través de las tradiciones ...”

—Translated by Marta Rios and Xavier Ortiz Monasterio

WHEN YOU FINISH READING LISTEN, PASS IT ALONG TO SOMEONE WHO MAY ENJOY LEARNING ABOUT SPIRITUAL DIRECTION. AS A GLOBAL LEARNING COMMUNITY, SDI INVITES YOU TO HELP CULTIVATE COMPASSION.

SDI INTERFAITH PILGRIMAGE TO GERMANY:
In the Footsteps of Hildegard of Bingen

Join SDI pilgrim guides Betsey Beckman and Christine Valters Paintner as we experience the landscapes and rhythms that nourished Hildegard of Bingen, mystic, poet, healer, and spiritual director.

The pilgrimage includes a celebration of Saint Hildegard’s feast day, September 17.

Register early. Space is limited.
Everyone seeking to be nourished by Hildegard’s wisdom is welcome.

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