Transformation Emerges

It was my long week of anniversaries: an adoption date, a wedding anniversary for a marriage that ended in divorce, and the eighth anniversary of my teenage son’s death by suicide. Annually, when this week cycles, I have learned to lean-in and ride the emotional wave, taking care of my tenderized heart. I do not know what to expect; it is a practice of being present.

On Tuesday evening, I received a call from my boss, the superintendent of schools, telling me a teen had died by suicide in Seward, Alaska. Our school district team kicked into gear to provide service and support for staff, students, and families. Two intense days passed, and I knew I’d made healthy, helpful contributions to schools in the town a hundred miles away. Thursday, it was confirmed I needed to go to Seward, for an 8:00 a.m. appointment with a film crew on Friday—the same day as Justin’s death anniversary; he had died when he was sixteen. There was no way out, I had to do it.

Everything in me resisted the two-hundred mile round-trip drive, on a dark unlit two-lane road, in icy winter conditions. I recalled Richard Rohr’s wisdom, “If we cannot find a way to make our wounds into sacred wounds, we invariably become negative or bitter—because we will be wounded. All suffering is potentially redemptive, all wounds are potentially sacred wounds. It depends on what you do with them.” I would go and also visit our principals and their schools. It wasn’t about the film crew, a bigger mystery was unfolding.

I left my home at 6:00 a.m. with a passenger—my fourteen week old Labrador retriever pup, curled up next to me on the seat. No moon, it was pitch dark. Miles and miles passed. I turned off the music; the rhythm of swishing windshield wiper blades remained. Memories flitted—one in particular that changed my life.

A few weeks after Justin died, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi arrived for a talk to spiritual directors in Denver, Colorado, USA. He came straight to me and wrapped me in his arms. He said, “I’ve just learned your son died … tonight we will pray for his new guides ….” Numb with grief, a light pierced my confusion: if Justin had guides, then heaven couldn’t be static, a place of arrival. A Catholic, I understood I had mistakenly constricted God and the afterlife into a static place and landscape.

I’d driven nearly two hours. Indigo blue light revealed black silhouettes of towering trees and jagged mountains. Mist and fog swirled. Suddenly I was aware that my destination, at the end of the road, was the town at the head of Resurrection Bay. Tears tickled my nose and eyes. I would park at our schools and be present to the stories and grief of these people, in this time. Unseen grace and years of redemptive suffering guided me. I thought of Matt Licada’s words, “You are wedded to the unknown now, and you are willing to give your heart to others and to this world—to use even your sadness, your hopelessness, and your aloneness to connect with others, allowing yourself to be crafted as a wild translucent vessel of kindness.”

—Pegge Erkeneff

SEEDS OF INTEREST:

- Book Review: The Art of Communicating
- Global Resources
- Field Guide: Transformation is possible
- Ask Owl
BOOK REVIEW

The Art of Communicating by Thich Nhat Hanh

The Art of Communicating is as significant of a book as was Peace is Every Step, nearly three decades ago. Composed in nine chapters, the words gently call the reader home into self, mindfulness, and expression with loving speech, when difficulties arise, at the workplace, and in community. Practices for compassionate community are included, together with the insight that our communication is our legacy or karma.

A foundation in the book is the invitation: “Please do come back home and listen. If you don’t communicate well with yourself, you cannot communicate well with another person. Come back again and again and communicate lovingly with yourself. That is the practice. You have to go back to yourself and listen to the happiness you may have in this moment; listen to the suffering in your body and in your mind, and learn how to embrace it and bring relief” (22).

Six mantras of loving speech are offered, along with reflections of how to practice them mindfully. “I am here for you” (73); “I know you are there, and I am very happy” (75); “I know you suffer, and that is why I am here for you” (77); “I suffer, please help” (79); “This is a happy moment” (82); and “You are partly right” (83). The reader is reminded time and again that nothing is more precious than presence, and, “If you want to help society, your community, your country, you have to have a home base” (90).

“Every time we communicate, we either produce more compassion, love, and harmony or we produce more suffering and violence” (139). Everyone can benefit from this book. Listening is an art, and Thich Nhat Hanh is a master guide.

GLOBAL RESOURCES: Supporting Your Spiritual Journey

New book on how to teach children!
Spiritual Direction for Jewish Children by Rabbi Dr Leslie Schotz, DMin
US$21.00 check (Intl extra) to:
Leslie Schotz, 24 Community Rd
Bay Shore, NY 11706

Servant Song Ministries
Retreat House & Spirituality Center
720 East Greene Street
Waynesburg, PA, USA
Telephone and fax: 724-852-2133
www.servantsongministries.org

April 24 – May 2, 2014
Emerging Wisdom
Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA
Spiritual Directors International series of educational events including a conference with Richard Rohr, OFM, Roshi Joan Halifax, Eve Ilsen, and Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, institutes, pilgrimage, and contemplative retreats. Registration at www.sdiworld.org

May 20, 2014
“How to Seek and Find a Spiritual Director”
FREE one hour SDI teleconference
12:00 p.m. EST; 5:00 p.m. GMT/UTC
Details and RSVP at www.sdiworld.org

7–14 June 2014
SDI Interfaith Pilgrimage to Scotland
Iona: Listening to the Wisdom of the Island
Join SDI pilgrim guides Andrew and Wendy Rudd and Sally Taylor as we explore the sacred isle of Iona which, for centuries, has drawn spiritual seekers to encounter the Mystery. Everyone seeking a sacred journey is welcome. For more information, contact events@sdisecond.org
www.sdiworld.org

July 18 – August 1, 2014
Abbot David’s School
www.mrcschoolforspiritualdirectors.mynetworksolutions.com or email at joyologist@gwi.net 207-491-7524
www.spiritworksministry.com

9-18 September 2014
SDI Interfaith Pilgrimage to Germany:
The Footsteps of Hildegard of Bingen
Join a community of pilgrims in Germany as we experience the landscapes and rhythms that nourished Saint Hildegard of Bingen, mystic, poet, healer, and spiritual director. Explore how the paths of the monk and artist can become doorways to interfaith companioning and the greening power of the Divine Presence in our lives. For more information, contact events@sdisecond.org
www.sdiworld.org

October 30 – November 2, 2014
Journey Conferences
North Carolina, USA
Featuring Dr. Michael Conforti
www.journeyconferences.com

Join more than 6,000 people in an inclusive, global contemplative, multi-faith learning community called Spiritual Directors International. For nearly twenty-five years, SDI has been committed to compassionate listening around the world and across traditions. SDI inspires and connects seekers with spiritual guidance. Everyone who cares about spiritual companionship is invited to become a member of Spiritual Directors International, a nonprofit charity serving seekers and the educational needs of people who offer spiritual companionship. www.sdiworld.org

● Connect on Facebook: Spiritual Directors International for spiritual care, http://on.fb.me/SDIFacebook
● Order a FREE subscription to Listen: A Seeker’s Resource for Spiritual Direction. Go to: www.sdiworld.org
Spiritual Formation at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Offering laypersons and pastors the opportunity to enter more deeply into the life of the Spirit.

Immersion Weekend Experience:
An Invitation to a Deeper Spiritual Life
May 15-18, 2014
Mary Lynn Callahan and PTS Faculty

Old Testament Spirituality
June 23-28, 2014
Jerome Creach

Office of Continuing Education
www pts.edu/CE-Listen
ConEd@pts.edu
813-928-1345

Retreat & Sabbatical Time
In New England

July 6—13 Being Whole, Being Holy:
Fostering a Holistic Spirituality
Drs. Wilkie & Noreen Cannon Au

July 21—27 It’s Time.
Commitment the Dream of Jesus
Michael Moran

July 30—Aug 6 A Window to Heaven:
Icon Painting Workshop
Brother Michael Moran, CP

Aug 18—23 Mothers, Sisters and Daughters: Standing
on Their Shoulders
Edwina Gateley

Aug 24—31 Creating (Greater) Consciousness of Our
Connectedness in the Cosmic Christ
Fr. Michael Crosby, OFMCap

GENESIS
Spiritual Life & Conference Center
53 Mill Street, Westfield, MA 01085
413-562-3627
GenesisSpiritualCenter.org

Please call or check our website for additional
summer retreats & sabbatical information.
NEW RELEASE

Becoming Who God Wants You to Be

60 MEDITATIONS FOR PERSONAL SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

W. Paul Jones

W. Paul Jones has crafted a series of topical meditations to facilitate self-guided spiritual direction with the ultimate spiritual director – the Holy Spirit. Examine your inner thoughts, truths, difficulties, and triumphs through reflection questions at the end of each chapter that prompt introspection and ultimately direction in your spiritual life.

#1324 • 978-0-8358-1324-2 • $14.00

To order: 800.972.0433 or Bookstore.UpperRoom.org
A Spiritual Directors International publication

Listen

WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG

Transformation is possible

“At times a broken heart will appear as your teacher, and you will be asked to practice the most radical yogas of sadness and vulnerability. At times you may see that the yoga of a broken heart is the highest path for you and will ask that you set aside all others, placing your tenderness, your aloneness, and the scary places upon the altar in front of you.

Allow yourself to be the great yogini of the broken heart, for it may be why you have come here—to feel the longing and the burning of this world, to hold and metabolize it inside the grace field of your own body, and to shower beings everywhere with your wisdom and your love.” – Matt Licata

Reflect

Set aside thirty minutes. Gather paper and pen. You will slowly read the text aloud four times in order to allow insight and vulnerability to ripple in you. The following questions can guide each new reading.

Breathe quietly for two or more minutes.

Reveal

In this moment, what do you notice, hear, feel? Make a note of what moves you.

What opens in you? Feel the emotion and thought in your body, heart, mind. Reflect and represent your insight on paper, then place your hands on your body where you feel most vulnerable. Breathe for a minute or more.

This time, allow the meaning and insight to penetrate into your aloneness and the grace field of your body. What do you desire to express and place upon the altar in front of you? Write or draw on paper if you are moved to do so. Breathe.

Read the text one last time. Be still, aware of your inhalation, and exhalation of every breath. Listen to what emerges within you. When you are ready, take several deep breaths, and shake your body: arms, legs, feet, hips, shoulders. Wiggle for sixty seconds.

Conclude by recording any insights you want to recall, and give thanks for your hidden support in the words of your own choosing.

Publisher: Spiritual Directors International
Executive Director: Liz Budd Ellmann, MDiv
Editor: Pegge Erkeneff
Production Supervisor: Tobias Becker
Submissions: listen@SDIworld.org
Advertising: www.SDIworld.org

Listen is published four times a year (January, April, July, October). The names Spiritual Directors International™, SDIWorld™, and SDI™ and its logo are trademarks of Spiritual Directors International, Inc., all rights reserved. Opinions and programs represented in this publication are of the authors and advertisers and may not represent the opinions of Spiritual Directors International, the Coordinating Council, or the editors.

Ignatian Training Program in Spiritual Direction & Retreat Ministry
Phase I beginning October 1 2014

Spiritual Directors’ Workshop
July 2-14 2014

Summer Practicum in Spiritual Direction
June 17-August 31 2014

40-Day Spiritual Exercises Institute
October 3-November 12 2014

Ignatius Jesuit Centre - Loyola House
Guelph Ontario Canada
www.loyolahouse.com | Phone 519 824 1250 ext. 266

Listen is an outreach publication of Spiritual Directors International. When you visit the SDI website at www.sdiworld.org, you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of spiritual traditions, and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors. More than 5,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at www.sdiworld.org.
Mariandale Retreat & Conference Center

JUNE

Artists’ Contemplative Retreat
Facilitator: Rose Amodeo Pertronella
Thursday, June 5 – Thursday, June 12

Always Gifts
Presenters: Gaynell Cronin and Jack Rathschmidt, OFM Cap.
Sunday, June 8 – Friday, June 13

Re-envisioning the Second Half of Life
Presenters: Maria and Michael Morwood
Sunday, June 15 – Saturday, June 21

Encountering the Gospel Again for the First Time
Presenter: Mary Schnieders, OP
Sunday, June 22 – Thursday, June 26

Dance of Divine Intimacy: Mutual Knowing and Loving
Presenter: Don Bisson, FMS
Thursday, June 26 – Sunday, June 29

Directed Retreat
Directors: Aedan McKeon, OP, Nancy Erts, OP, and Judy Schlavo
Sunday, June 29 – Saturday, July 5

New Window of Opportunity
Presenter: Beverly Musgrave
Sunday, June 29, 6:00 pm – Friday, July 4, 11:00 am

JULY

Heart Themes in Matthew’s Gospels
Presenter: Michael H. Crosby, OFM Cap
Saturday, July 5 – Wed., July 9

Crafters’ and Quilters’ Retreat: Postcards Tell Our Stories
Prayer Facilitator: Nancy Erts, OP
Craft Instructor: Patricia Werner
Wednesday, July 9 – Sunday, July 13

Women’s Retreat: Wise Women of the Word; Healing the World
Presenter: Nancy Erts, OP
Sunday, July 13 – Saturday, July 19

Men’s Retreat: Real Men Pray
Presenter: Patrick Cecary-Burns
Sunday, July 13 – Saturday, July 19

Directed Retreat
Directors: Francis Gargani, CSJ and team members
Sunday, July 27 – Sunday, August 3

AUGUST

Finding a Living Faith: Revisiting the Creed
Presenter: Mary Schnieders, OP
Sunday, August 3 – Friday, August 8

The Heart Cave: Deepening the Journey Within
Presenter: Michael Laratonda, FMS
Sunday, August 10 – Saturday, August 16

Christians Evolving Faithfully as the Universe
Presenters: Carol DeAngelo, SC and Nancy Erts, OP
Sunday, August 17 – Friday, August 22

Mariandale Retreat Center is available for private and group retreats. Contact Linda Rivers, OP, 914-941-4455, lrivers@ophope.org for inquiries or to arrange private retreats.

For a full listing of programs & registration:
www.mariandale.org

*As You Are Able: We offer you a range that allows you the freedom to choose what is appropriate to your situation while being as generous as possible.
Question: I am suffering from the loss and disappointment of a significant relationship. I realize that past losses are resurging, and although I feel a resistance to deal with this, simultaneously I want to choose a new path to integration and wholeness, shifting anger, blame, and pain. I also want to understand where God is present and absent in my experience. Would a spiritual director assist me?

Hoot Hoot: Yes, a spiritual companion can accompany you! Sometimes we discover we simply need to hear our own voice, and deepest grief, suffering, or aloneness—in the presence of a man or woman who listens with compassion. A spiritual director brings tenderness and a capacity to resonate with your desire to notice how God is present and seemingly absent in your experience. A mighty chasm can be healed when we lean into our lived experience and trust the process from unlived healing into transformation. A path to peace is the willingness to explore all the places which dwell within us, recognition of our own vulnerability, and perhaps the accompaniment of a vast grace or field of love seeking our wholeness. A spiritual director is trained to be a sacred companion to our soul and process along the journey, and is here for you.

—If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail Listen@sdworld.org.
“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

SDI Interfaith Pilgrimage to Scotland: Iona
7-14 June 2014

Listening to the Wisdom of the Island

Are you longing for a deeper relationship with the peace beyond understanding? Join SDI pilgrim guides from the United Kingdom, Andrew and Wendy Rudd and Sally Taylor, as we listen for spiritual guidance from the sacred island of Iona. For centuries, Iona has drawn spiritual seekers to encounter Mystery.

Everyone seeking a journey into the heart of a sacred “thin” place is welcome.

For more information, contact events@SDIworld.org

www.SDIworld.org