



Living in the Balance

August 2016

I cannot sit still. I pace around. I straighten shelves that are already straight. "I think you should meditate." "Prayer will help." "You just have to believe. God has a plan." I listen to this advice from the well-meaning and think, "I believe I will have another bowl of that coffee chocolate chip ice cream and please pass the whipped cream." Since I gave up smoking years ago, ice cream has become my "go to" cure for what ails me. While I eat ice cream, others turn on the TV or social media seeking allies or diversion.

In a world drowning in ambiguity, angst and anxiety, we have become seekers of certitude. When people are being shot in the streets...when the fabric of our society appears to be unraveling....people seek hard fast rules! Laws! Oracles! Someone or something with THE answers! ANYTHING to assuage this tension!

I cannot sit still. I want to do something. That's what I do. I do. I fix. Don't ask me to "sit" in the middle of all the unknown. Give me a job!

And where is God in all this? And I mean that from the deepest part of me. What is my grain of sand to carry to the midst of a tsunami of fear and doubt?

Thich Nhat Hanh talks about our unwillingness in the West to sit with our emotions. Our anxiety. Our not knowing. We have to have an answer. As a result we just run from one thing in the hopes that what we run to is better than what we are running from, when in fact running blindly seems to take us to yet another place of "not knowing." He asks us instead to recognize the feeling and be with it. The centering prayer practice calls it the welcoming prayer. "Here comes anxiety, angst and ambiguity again. Welcome. Sit down. Let's have a chat."

How long can I sit in the great "unknowing"? Handling the tension is improved...or not...to the degree I can tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty. Will it be the basis for victimhood or for resilience? Can I move from "how can this world...my world...be so screwed up?" and accept the invitation Jungian analyst Jerry Wright talks about... the call to "wonder"? *I wonder what this is really about. I wonder when or if I have seen this before. I wonder if I can reframe what is going on. Is there potential and new energy for renewal? Can the Phoenix rise?*

Life swirls both dark and light. Life unfolds as messiness. And as the Buddhists tell us, all is impermanence. To be fully alive I have to own it all. Give me eyes to see that right now in this moment...**it is what it is**. To know and accept what is at a deeper level. That acceptance of what is does not ask me to tolerate the intolerable. Or to sit on my hands when there is something I can do. But I do not want anxiety to make the decision. I don't want angst to be the guide. I don't want to come from tension and create more tension. I want to be moving toward wholeness and integration. Sitting....or walking...long enough to discern how to live in the outer world starts, for me, by coming back to a centered and focused inner world. The answer to my angst is not "out there." The wisdom lies within me and is open to wondering.

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Calendar considerations.....

John Philip Newell

Spirituality Conference, St. Philip's Cathedral,
Atlanta, GA, Saturday October 29

<https://www.stphilipscathedral.org/Learn/Prayer-and-Spiritual-Formation/Spirituality-Conference/>
Mountain Top Lectures, Dawsonville, GA, November 11 –12
<http://www.mountaintoplectures.org/page-1108406>

The Sophia Institute, Charleston, SC

The One Life We are Given – Finding the Wisdom that Waits in Your Heart, Mark Nepo September 16 – 18
Soul Saturation: Igniting an Intimate Relationship with your Soul, October 7 and 8
An Interspiritual Approach to Contemplative Living, October 28 and 29
www.thesophiainstitute.org

The Four Consents: A Journey into the Fullness of Life

Offered by Myers Park Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC
September 24, 2016
jotps46@carolina.rr.com

James Carroll: Reimagining Christ for the Modern World

Offered by the Anderson School of Theology for Laypersons
October 16, 2016. Two different lectures at 2:30 and 4:30
<http://astonline.org/>

Southern Dharma Center

The Nature of Awareness, August 5 – 12
Touching the Untouched: A Vipassana Retreat, August 24 – 28
Buddhism and the Twelve Steps, September 1 – 5
Experiencing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness through Yoga, September 15 – 18
Wake Up! Meditation on the Cushion and in Daily Life, September 22 – 25
For more information www.southerndharma.org

Spirituality and Practice E-courses

Practicing Spirituality with Native Americans begins on August 1
As It Is: Spiritual Journaling begins on August 8
Other online access anytime courses include, Joan Chittister
Sylvia Boorstein, James Hollis, Cynthia Bourgeault, Rami Shapiro
<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ecourses>





Calendar considerations.....

Kanuga Conference Center

Faith, Art and Creative Expression, August 21 – 26
Lansing Lee Conference with Mark Oppenheimer, October 16 – 18
Enneagram Conference, October 27 – 30
Icon Writing, November 13 – 19
www.kanuga.org

The Anchorage

Praying Scriptures at Mepkin Abbey
October 3 – 7
<http://www.theanchorage.org/events.htm#Event5>

Awakening Soul 2016

Tending the Fire with Brian McLaren and Becca Stephens
November 10 – 13
Lutheridge, Asheville, NC
www.awakeningsoulpresents.org

Valle Crucis Conference Center

Advanced Centering Prayer Retreat, November 27 – December 4
<http://www.vcconferences.org/programs>

*I am only one, but still I am one.
I cannot do everything,
but still I can do something;
and because I cannot do everything,
I will not refuse to do something
that I can do.*

Edward Everett Hale





About Spiritual Direction —

- Offers a space and time for you to explore, reflect upon, and deepen your relationship with God.
- Provides a haven from the daily busyness of the outer world and opens a time to be still and to reflect on your inner journey.
- Is a companioning relationship grounded in dialogue and discernment.
- Explores ways you may integrate spirituality into your daily life.
- Is not limited to any one spiritual practice or tradition.
- May involve one or two meetings or multiple meetings over time.

You may wish to consider spiritual companioning if you are —

- Longing for a deeper relationship with the Divine
- Looking for a place to dialogue about spiritual questions
- Seeking ways to connect with the Spirit in a more intentional way
- Discerning ways to live in a more integrated and whole way
- Standing at a crossroads in your life
- Exploring new or fresh ways to be in relationship with God

For more information about Spiritual Direction, please feel free to contact me by phone
864-246-3960 or via email at wmeade@meadellc.com

Wanda Meade, M.Ed., Licensed Professional Counselor
Completed Haden Institute in Spiritual Direction Program
PO Box 14940
Greenville, SC 29610



All of the photos this month are my work. These are from provincial France and were taken in May 2016.