



Living in the Balance

April 2017

The wind blows straight through my yoga pants as I pull my hoodie up and double check the zipper with my gloved hands. "The coldest days since January," quipped the weather man adding, "And a brisk wind blowing about 25 miles per hour gusting higher!" The sand comes across to the shoreline in ankle high waves whipping into miniature flying cones spinning into the ocean. The wind chaps my face.

The beach is deserted except for the dogs dragging their owners along. A few sandpipers scurry in and out of the foam. Probing. I'm never sure for what. I love the solitude. I look out at the horizon. I feel the same sweet solace I felt as a child at the beach. I marvel at how quickly the years have flown.

I find several shells intact. A rarity. A lettered olive. A few ark shells still hinged. But most of the debris is a graveyard of crushed houses once occupied by soft little sea animals. A piece of whelk. The hard top of a long gone horseshoe crab. The broken sunburned remains of a conch. And thousands of little bits and pieces crushed under foot or battered by the waves. The remnants of what was once whole. What happened to the little sheltered lives once hunkered inside I don't know.

My inner Crusader Rabbit always begins enthusiastically looking for the faultless whole. "This is the perfect house! Theology! Job! My true calling! YEAH! I have found it!" Thank God for Crusader Rabbit enthusiasm that gets me out of bed. And if things don't work out for flawless, Crusade is forever, "Let me see those broken pieces! I can fix that! I have several tubs of Gorilla glue!"

Crusader never gives up. She remains ever hopeful for finding something beautifully unspoiled and sometimes she does. The perfectly shaped lettered olive sits next to the flawless whelk and the intact sand dollars on the entry way table of my home. And next to the perfect rest the dried twigs and the shell pieces and the broken rocks and bits of fossil I've collected. I like the way they look and feel. So much mystery in the broken. What was this nuggly little piece connected to? What creature marked this clay?

As artist Erin Smith says, "If you are always looking down for the perfect shell, you're going to miss the other perfectly fabulous crap on the beach!" I take notice now of the remnants of twigs and sponge pieces and crab bits and feathers and crushed shells. Things left behind. Things once whole. And I think about my own protections that have come and gone. Sometimes I was brave enough to step out in vulnerability from a too small place. Other times I found myself broken and cracked open by circumstances or the out of nowhere; my bare rawness exposed....at least to myself. As the time has passed, I am not always able to ferret out my own clam bits from the oyster rubble from the other drifting debris. Does it matter? I found new, fresh places to shelter. And while nothing is solid, life feels firm and imperfect and mine. I am grateful for the dawn and the sandpipers and the glittering horizon and the clouds and the wind. All moment to moment. I have stopped looking for flawless and stare in wonder all of the "perfectly fabulous crap" on the beach of my life. I quit carrying Gorilla glue. I stopped working on perfection and focus on being me in this instant of now. Embracing the cracked and the broken and the brave and the daring.....glued by Grace.

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Calendar considerations.....

Center for Spiritual Wisdom

Healing the Heart of Democracy Series begins Thursday, March 30 and continues each Thursday evening for eight weeks at Brevard College.

Short Introduction to Centering Prayer, August 19 and 20

At Valle Crucis Retreat Center, Valle Crucis, NC

This and other offerings <https://center4spiritualwisdom.org/about/>

Southern Dreaming Regional Conference

Sponsored by the International Association for the Study of Dreams

April 28 and 29, 2017

To be held at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, SC

For more information: <http://www.asdreams.org/regionals/southcarolina2017/>

Silent Retreat Weekends

June 2 - 4, October 6 - 8 and December 1 - 3, 2017

Order of Saint Helena, North Augusta, South Carolina

<https://www.osh.org/events.html>

The Anchorage in Greenville, SC

The Grace of Our Mortality: Opening to the Fullness of Life with Bill Dietrich, May 5 - 7

Kanuga, Hendersonville, NC

For this and other offerings go to <http://theanchorage.org/events.htm>

Lake Junaluska Retreat Center

Listening for the Heartbeat of God, John Philip Newell,

June 30 - July 2

Interfaith Peace Conference, November 16 - 19

http://www.lakejunaluska.com/events/spiritual_enrichment/

Southern Dharma Center

In Nature, Our True Nature, April 4 - 9

Know Thyself, April 18 - 23

Death as a Spiritual Teacher, May 4 - 7

Zen Mind/Body Zen, May 17 - 20

A Marriage of Yoga and Meditation, May 24 - 29

www.southerndharma.org





Calendar considerations.....

Haden Summer Dream and Spirituality Conference

May 28 – June 2, 2017

Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, NC

<http://www.hadeninstitute.com/summer-dream-conference>

Centering Prayer Retreats

Eight Day Silent Retreat, June 4 – June 11, 2017

St. Mary's Retreat Center, Sewanee, TN

<http://www.stmaryssewanee.org/about/events/2017/06/04/eight-day-centering-prayer-retreat.2268432>

Advanced Centering Prayer Retreat

Valle Crucis Retreat Center, Valley Crucis, NC

November 26 – December 2, 2017

Contact Becky Hannah for more information (828) 702-3518

Center for Action and Contemplation with Richard Rohr

Trinity: The Soul of Creation, April 6 –8, on-line option available

CONSPIRE 2017, July 7–9

Albuquerque New Mexico

<https://cac.org/events/conferences/>

Spirituality and Practice e-courses

Offering a variety of e-courses on demand in many different traditions

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ecourses/>

The Sophia Institute, Charleston, SC

Tears to Triumph, Marianne Williamson, Saturday, April 30

The Way Under the Way: The Place of True Meeting, Mark Nepo, May 19 – 21

Becoming Fearless: Feeling Safe within yourself and within the World, Connie Numbers, June 23 –24

See the website for these and other one day events. www.thesophiainstitute.org

Kanuga Conference Center

Faith, Art and Creative Expression: A Liturgical Arts Conference,

August 20 – 24

Lansing Lee Conference, October 22 – 29

Enneagram, October 26 – 29

Icon Writing with Teresa Harrison, November 13 – 18

www.kanuga.org





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
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The opening photo is the copy of a card by artist Erin Smith who makes me laugh out loud. Her cards are not for the faint of heart if you are offended by language. <http://erinsmithart.com/> The rest of the photos are perfectly imperfect objects I found on the beach.