



Living in the Balance

January 2018

Hear the starfish parable again. One day, an old man was walking along a beach that was littered with thousands of starfish that had been washed ashore by the high tide. As he walked he came upon a young boy who was eagerly throwing the starfish back into the ocean, one by one. Puzzled, the man looked at the boy and asked what he was doing. Without looking up from his task, the boy simply replied, "I'm saving these starfish, Sir." The old man chuckled aloud, "Son, there are thousands of starfish and only one of you. What difference can you make?" The boy picked up a starfish, gently tossed it into the water and turning to the man, said, "I made a difference to that one!"

Recently, I heard an interview that Krista Tippett had with Anand Giridharadas. He offered a different take on this story. He suggested that we take a look from the old man's perspective believing that he was silenced by the storyteller. What if we asked different questions? What if we asked instead, "Why are the starfish beaching?"

Sometimes we look at the problem and offer solutions without looking at the counter questions. Let's start a charter school for kids who are failing. Maybe we can save those kids. Let's arm teachers so when there is a shooting they can defend themselves and their students. Let's take more supplies to the homeless living on the streets. Let's give vouchers and tax credits for private schools since our public schools are failing. Let's cut back on our health care programs because people should take better care of themselves so they don't need help.

What if we turned to wonder and asked the why and what questions? Kids are failing in schools in many cases because they are living with housing and food insecurity. Some of them have parents who work two or three jobs and still can't make a living wage. How do policies contribute to this? Gun violence is on the rise. Random shootings make our public places targets. What are the causes? Many of the homeless living on the street have addiction and/or psychiatric problems. How can we address these issues and offer safe places for recovery? We have thousands of children experiencing adverse childhood experiences due to domestic violence, abuse, and unsafe communities. If prevention and early treatment are key why do we cut off the funding for these programs?

One starfish thrown back in the ocean does not guarantee that the starfish will not be beached again. A food bank. A hot meal. A pair of socks. A yearly fundraiser for child abuse. All helpful, but they do not address the underlying problems and issues. I see many of our policy decisions systematically cutting off one of the most important aspects of our democracy. ACCESS. When we shut down ACCESS to quality public schools and universal health care and affordable housing and a living wage, we control the oxygen and then step on peoples' air hoses. If we are about the common good and believe in our democracy then we have to be willing to look at the ways we offer or prevent access. And that questioning has to start in our own backyards. Our own neighborhoods. Get involved. Go to meetings. Find out what is happening and ask yourself, "Is this providing or limiting access?" Act!

If we are to make this democratic dream work we have to work to make it work. A different turn in the tide and we could each and all be beached on the shore. Let us be open to discovery and commitment and ACCESS for *all* in this New Year.

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Calendar considerations.....

Silent Retreat Weekends

March 2 – 4, 2018

June 1 – 3, 2018

Order of Saint Helena, North Augusta, South Carolina

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

Valle Crucis Conference Center

Mysticism & Mindfulness in the Work of Hildegard of Bingen

Friday, April 13, 10 am - 3 pm

Short Introduction to Centering Prayer

Friday, May 6 - Sunday, May 8

<https://vcconferences.org/programs>

Kanuga Conference Center

Iconography with Suzanne Schleck, February 17 –23, 2018

Lansing Lee Conference: Civil Discourse in America, March 16 – 18, 2018

Faith, Art and Creative Expression, August 19 – 24, 2018

www.kanuga.org

Southern Dharma Center

Loving-kindness, Compassion, and the Awakened Heart, March 15 – 18, 2018

Liberating the Mind and Heart, A Metta-Vipassana Retreat, March 29 – April 2, 2018

In Nature, Our True Nature, April 7 – 13, 2018

Fueling the Fire of Our Heart's, Deepest Desire, April 17 – 22, 2018

These programs fill quickly!

www.southerndharma.org

Greenville Friends of Jung

A weekend with Jungian Analyst, Dr. Barbara Kovaz at the Sears Shelter in Greenville, SC

- What Does Birth Have to Do with It? Friday evening February 23, 2018
- What Do We do about it? Workshop 9:00 a.m. until noon, Saturday, February 24, 2018

Mask Making Workshop with Dr. Deborah Armstrong 9:00 a.m.
until noon, Saturday, April 21, 2018 (CEU's available)

The group also offers a monthly film and discussion.

<https://sites.google.com/site/friendsofjunggreenville/events>





Calendar considerations.....

The Sophia Institute, Charleston, SC

Embodying your Peaceful Feminine Nature, January 26 – 28, 2018
Energy Medicine for Healthy Living, Melanie Smith, February 9 – February 10
Evolutionary Narrative with Joan Borysenko, February 23 – 25
Hidden Grace with Andrew Harvey and Caroline Myss, March 9 – 10
The Gift of Deepening and the Radiance of All Things with Mark Nepo, May 18 – 20
See the website for these and other one day events. www.thesophiainstitute.org

St. Mary's Retreats

Eight Day Centering Prayer Retreat, January 28 – February 4, 2018
Three Day Lenten Centering Prayer Retreat, March 23 – 25
Enneagram Conference, April 6 – 8
Three Day Centering Prayer Retreat, June 1 – June 3
Ten Day Centering Prayer Retreat, June 22 – July 1
St. Mary's Retreat Center, Sewanee, TN
<http://www.stmaryssewanee.org/about/events>

Interfaith Peace Conference

Meeting Each Other: Can We Talk? March 1 – 4, 2018
Lake Junaluska, North Carolina
http://www.lakejunaluska.com/events/spiritual_enrichment/peace/

Cynthia Bourgeault

The Cathedral of St. Philip, Atlanta, Georgia
Saturday, March 17, 2018
<https://www.stphilipscathedral.org/>

Wild Women Weekends at Lutheridge, Asheville, NC

February and March 2018
For information about this and other events
<http://www.novusway.com/our-programs/adult/lutheridge/>

Anderson Forum for Progressive Theology

Robin Meyers will speak on April 8, 2018
Anderson, SC
<http://astlonline.org/>

Haden Institute Summer Dream and Spirituality Conference

Featuring Jean Shindoa Bolen, Alan Jones, and Pittman McGee
May 27 – June 1 at Kanuga Conference Center
<https://www.hadeninstitute.com/summer-dream-conference>





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 photos in this journal are my work. They are winter beach photos from the Florida Panhandle and Isle of Palms.

