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# Living in the Balance

## November and December 2019

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Several years ago, while we were hiking in Montana how did I not see a mound of buffalo poop the size of a wagon wheel until I stepped in the middle of it. Actually, I blame Montana. With my camera in hand I was totally absorbed in the glorious zippidity do dah blue sky. Then all at once I was shoe deep in poop. I knew it was out there. There were buffalo and elk and bear warnings. Poop comes with the territory, but I was not expecting to literally step in it. I thought I'd have myself a photographer dream day, eyeing the light, looking up and out. At that moment, I wish I'd looked down.

After much grass wiping and silent cursing, I removed my shoe and tried to decide what to do next. Fortunately, having inherited a good set of neurotic genes from my parents, I had lots of antiseptic wipes in my bag and because I am a follower of the "bag your trash out" rule I had a small grocery bag. I wiped and wiped and wiped my shoe. I skeptically eyeballed the packet's claim of "kills 99.9% of common germs." I somehow don't think that buffalo poop was one of the products tested in the Good Housekeeping laboratory. I am also imagining how much better prepared I would have been if I had packed some of those disposable latex gloves. Add that to the list of travel essentials. Be a better Girl Scout!

Fast forward from sunny Montana years ago to now and a seven-week online course with Tara Brach and Jack Kornfield on Awareness. I am hearing again that I am part of the fabric of life. Be in the Presence and the now. Everything is impermanent. Trust the unfolding. "**Embrace it all! Everything!**" she says. I sigh and hope to the heavens that she will not start talking about "loving everything and everyone." But I am starting to hear Led Zeppelin singing, "Talking about luv" and honestly, I "hear" my eyes roll.

And then Brach shared this story she found very compelling. *"When the British first tried to establish golf courses in Calcutta, they ran into a certain kind of trouble in that monkeys from nearby trees would drop down onto the course and then chase the balls and throw them around playing with them. Basically, being monkeys. It really infuriated the golfers and so they built fences to try to keep the monkeys out, but monkeys climb! They tried to transport them away in vans. No luck. They finally gave in and developed a novel rule for all the golf courses. You have to play the ball wherever the monkey drops it. So in our lives the monkey drops the ball....in job layoffs, divorces, illness, financial problems, etc. And every day in small ways we talk about getting through the day. The traffic jams, the computer glitches, a perceived insult, the flu. Stuff happens and the wisdom is that it is all part of the path. And that wherever the monkey drops the ball, if we could have that realization and the mantra "this too" that keeps on including. This is where the waking up can happen. And somehow, we realize that it is all equal....and that it is really about how we are relating. You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf."* This story has helped me navigate a number of monkeys and begin to let go of the idea of some great cosmic buffalo poop plot that the Universe is out to get me and thee. I still carry handwipes, get my flu shot and carry a trash bag trying to be prepared. But the monkeys are out there being monkeys and playing the ball where it lies is the embracing of the "all" journey of moment to moment, monkey to monkey.



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## *Calendar considerations.....*

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### **Silent Retreat Weekends**

December 6 – 8  
Order of Saint Helena, North Augusta, South Carolina  
<https://www.osh.org/events.html>

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### **Valle Crucis Conference Center**

Centering Prayer Retreat, December 1 – 8, 2019

<https://vcconferences.org/programs>

Information is also available now for registering for one of the hermitages for personal retreat.

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### **Southern Dharma Center**

Jhanas, Metta, and Dependent Origination, November 9 – 22

The Dharma of Collective Resiliency, December 12 – 15

New Year's Retreat, December 28 – January 3, 2020

In Nature our True Nature, March 28 – April 4, 2020

More programs for 2020 are listed on the website. Retreats fill quickly.

[www.southerndharma.org](http://www.southerndharma.org)

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### **Lake Junaluska**

Interfaith Peace Conference, November 21 – 24

Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

<http://www.firstlightproductions.org/new-events/>

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### **The Anchorage**

Annual Beach Retreat, January 31 – February 2, 2020, Pawley's Island, SC

Praying the Scripture Ignatian Directed Retreat, Mepkin Abbey, March 30 – April 3, 2020

<http://www.theanchorage.org/events.htm>

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### **Kanuga Conference Center**

Icon Writing, November 16 – 22

Iconography, February 8 – 14, 2020

Lansing Lee Conference, March 13 – 15, 2020

[www.kanuga.org](http://www.kanuga.org)

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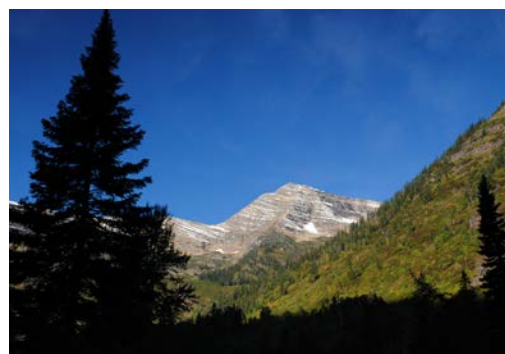
### **Awakening Soul**

Barbara Brown Taylor, Jacqui Lewis, and Larry Maze

November 7 – 10

Lutheridge Conference Center, Asheville, NC

<https://www.awakeningsoulpresents.org/>





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## *Calendar considerations.....*

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### **The Sophia Institute, Charleston, SC**

Walking Each Other Home: Love and Resilience in Difficulty Times, Mirabai Starr

November 1 – 2

See the website for these and other one day events.

[www.thesophia institute.org](http://www.thesophia institute.org)

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### **St. Mary's Sewanee**

Celtic Christianity, November 8 – 10

Eight-Day Centering Prayer Retreat, January 5 – 12, 2020

St. Mary's Retreat Center, Sewanee, TN

<http://www.stmaryssewanee.org/about/events>

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### **Anderson Forum for Progressive Theology**

Seasons of the Spiritual Journey, Steve Morgan, 3:00 p.m. Sunday, January 19

Brian McLaren, June 14, 2020

Matthew Fox, October 11, 2020

Anderson, SC

[www.afptonline.org](http://www.afptonline.org)

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### **Montreat**

Discovering Renewal, Finding Renewal in the Everyday, April 13 – 16

Columbia Theological Seminary Spiritual Formation, April 16 – 19 and April 19 – 22

Montreat Retreat Center, Montreat, NC

<https://montreat.org/events/micl-2019>

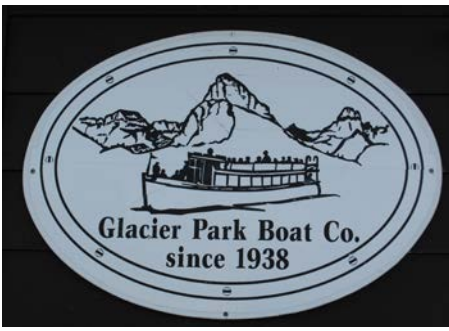
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*As we enter one of the busiest seasons of the year,  
consider taking time to just "be." To breathe in the moment.*

*Find a quiet place.*

*Walk and feel the air on your face and your feet on the ground.*





## 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

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For more information about Spiritual Direction, please feel free to contact me by phone  
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*The photos are my work and were taken in Glacier National Park and areas near Whitefish, Montana.*

