



Living in the Balance

April 2012

The Dalai Lama was being interviewed for his book on happiness. When asked about remorse, His Holiness told a story. One time an elderly Buddhist man came to see him to ask for instructions on how to do a very difficult Yoga pose. His Holiness told the man that he was too old and should not attempt the pose as it would be too dangerous. The old man thanked the Dalai Lama, went home, and killed himself. He wanted to be reincarnated as a younger, healthier man who could attempt the pose. His Holiness was overcome with guilt over this man's death. "So how did you deal with the guilt?" asked the interviewer. "How did you get rid of the remorse?" The Dalai Lama sat there in silence for a minute or two. "I didn't get rid of it. It's still with me every day," His Holiness answered. "I just continue to live with my heart open."

I was stunned. I naively believed the Dalai Lama was so conscious that he could foresee the consequences of his actions and not make any missteps. But His Holiness has clay feet, too. Like me. Like you. Each of us puts one foot in front of the other and sometimes steps off a cliff. The trick is to keep the heart open to all experience. To live with all that life has to teach us. To embrace the pain and grief and remorse as much as the joy and pleasure. His Holiness leaned into all of the heart's learning. He did not fold up his robes.....He went on being the Dalai Lama.

When I first considered offering spiritual direction, I heard every skeleton in my closet start laughing like hyenas. "You?! Seriously? Spiritual companion!" They snorted as they rolled on their backs and kicked their bony feet in the air. They laughed so hard they could hardly breathe. "If you were Catholic, you'd be in the confessional so long you'd need a priest rotation!" they howled.

On Sunday mornings, I used to visit a friend of mine who was in AA. We attended speakers meetings in which AA folks told their personal stories. They confessed it all, right there in front of God and anyone else who would listen. They came clean about deeply wounding others and themselves. They said their say so that others could see that it was possible to stay sober and live with the toughest of remorse. They described making amends. I was impressed by their honesty and openness.

But I was especially intrigued by what people did when they could not, for whatever good reason, make amends. Some told their stories in hopes of raising consciousness in others. Some did their own personal penance.

AA is grounded in the twelve steps, and every speaker spoke of doing the step work. They acknowledged the skeletons, confessed them to one another, and made amends in some way. Then they worked at living into Step 12 which says, "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we try to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs." They, too, leaned into the heart's learning. They stepped forward into a life of sobriety with a heart more open, with truer authenticity, with a deeper consciousness.

I have been doing my own version of a twelve-step program for many years. I know most of the skeletons, but an occasional dry bone will turn up in the trunk of my car or in some attic box. I acknowledge the new ones. I don't bury them. Those dry bones places have taught me more than a hundred "atta girls." At some point, I have to choose. Hang with the bones in the closet or move on. Wear sack cloth and ashes or live what I know. The decision was made some time ago. But I think I need to say it out loud.

I am stepping out, knowing my shadow and my light. Aware of my shortcomings and my gifts, I am offering spiritual companionship. I am going to lean into it all and offer others time and space to seek Mystery's grace.

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*Every now
and then
I have a quiet
chat with the
skeletons in
my closet —
just so they
don't come
looking for me
on their own.*

Erin Smith
Artist



Calendar considerations.....

Major Exhibit of Tibetan Mandalas

Michael Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, GA
Showing now through April 15
www.carlos.emory.edu

Nourishing Our Spiritual Lives Through the Healing Labyrinth

Lauren Artress, presenter

Friday, April 13, from 7:00 until 9:00 and Saturday, April 14, 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

An intensive two-day facilitator training is being offered on April 15 and 16.

Avondale Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC

For more information and/or to register www.charlottelabyrinthgroup.com

Writing the Sacred: A journaling, poetry Psalm Writing Workshop

Ray McGinnis leading

Sunday, May 6 from 2:30 until 4:30 p.m.

Offered by the Peace Congregational United Church of Christ, Clemson, SC

To register or for more information: 864-634-4205

Franciscan Mysticism: Why is it Unique

Webcast with Fr. Richard Rohr

April 21

www.cac.org

Begin the New Year with Practices that Support Opening the Heart

Friday, May 4

Valle Crucis Conference Center, Valle Crucis, NC www.highsouth.com/vallecrucis

The Sophia Institute

The Book of Awakening with Mark Nepo May 11 – 13.

A Time of Awakening: Mindfulness Training and Heart Callings Retreat with Hank Brandt and Carolyn Rivers
May 14 – 18

The Second Half of Life: Opening the Eight Gates of Wisdom with Angeles Arrien July 6 – 8

Charleston, South Carolina

www.thesophia institute.org

Southern Dharma Retreats, Hot Springs, North Carolina

In Nature, Our True Nature (*Won* Buddhism) April 4 – 8

Guiding your own Practice (Vipassana) April 12 – 15

Nourishing Ourselves with Meditation, Mindfulness and Yoga (Zen) April 19 – 22

Strength in Compassion, April 26 – 30

Concentration and Insight (Vipassana) May 10 – 20

Beginner's Mind for Everyone: The Undoing of Doing, May 25 – 28

For more information contact Carol Meyer at southerndharma@earthlink.net

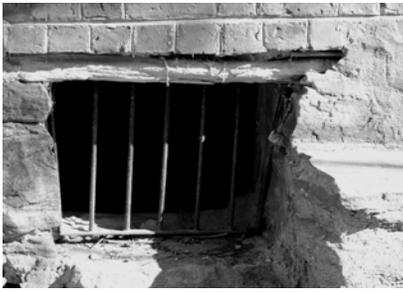
Jung and Neuroscience

The Asheville Jung Center and the International Association for the Study of Dreams (IASD) will be offering this presentation from the IASD conference.

June 28

For more information go to <http://ashevillejungcenter.org>





Calendar considerations.....

Anderson School of Theology for Laypersons

John Selby Spong – Saturday, August 4, at 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

James Carroll – Sunday, September 30, at 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

For more information www.astlonline.org

Summer Dream Conference – God's Forgotten Language

May 27 – June 1, 2012

Offered by the Haden Institute

Held at the Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, NC

www.hadeninstitute.com

Spirituality and Practice

On-demand courses available with Cynthia Bourgeault, James Hollis, Sr. Joan Chittister, Rabbi Rami, Thomas Moore, and Sylvia Boorstein.

You'll find a variety of faith traditions represented.

Courses include Centering Prayer, The Essence of the Qur'an, Rumi and Living a Spiritual Life, Lectio Divina and The Wisdom of Muhammad.

www.spiritualityandpractice.com

Eight-Day Centering Prayer Intensive Retreat

Rev. Thomas Morris, leading

June 3 – 10

St. Mary's, Sewanee, Tennessee

For more information contact: carolyndgoddard@gmail.com

Machu Picchu and Peru's Sacred Valley – A Pilgrimage

August 8 – 20, 2012

Offered by Jerry Wright, Jungian analyst, and Diana McKendree, Jungian psychotherapist.

The pilgrimage will include Peruvian teachers and guides.

For more information, contact Jerry Wright at jwright@morrisbb.net or call 770-656-3818

Welcoming Prayer Retreat

October 5 – 7

St. Francis Springs Prayer Center, Stoneville, NC

For more information 222.4thdayjourney.org

Lansing Lee Conference with Eric Metaxas

October 29 – 30

Kanuga, Hendersonville SC

For more information www.kanuga.org

Advance Centering Prayer Retreat

Becky Hannah, facilitating

Sunday, November 25 – Sunday, December 2

Valle Crucis Retreat Center, Valle Crucis, NC

www.highsouth.com/vallecrucis





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

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All of the photos in this month's journal are my work. The skeleton.....wellyou know how that is.....he just showed up and I happened to catch him! The other photos are from Taos Pueblo, an old house in Pendleton, SC, and a grave in Charleston, SC. The photos on the last page are from the Botanical Gardens at Clemson, SC.

