



**Prevent Child Abuse**  
America

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# Living in the Balance

April 2014

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In May 1973, I was finishing my first year as a school counselor in a large junior high when a 14-year-old honor roll student came into my office the last week of school and said, "I cannot go home! I can't live in this all summer! You have to help me!" And then she began to pour out what would be one of the worst cases of sexual abuse that I would hear in my career. Her story has stayed with me and what I remember most vividly is one line she said about her father. "He nailed the windows shut so we couldn't get out." In February 2013, her story would surface again and through a series of synchronicities would lead to the **Finding Voice** project.

The heart of the **Finding Voice** project is raising awareness about sexual abuse and helping people discover ways to help prevent abuse in their own communities.

Over the course of a year, I have created 13 survivor story panels. These panels are captured on 24" x 36" canvases. The photographic images for each panel are my work. The story lines that are paired with the photo images were entrusted to me for this project by individual survivors in the hope of opening eyes and raising consciousness.

According to their research, *Silent Tears* <http://silenteartssc.org/> reports that in adult retrospective studies 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men were sexually abused before the age of 18. Many have never told their story to anyone. This series of panels in the **Finding Voice** project has given these survivors an opportunity to tell their stories without revealing their identities, a process that has been freeing for many of them. When one survivor saw her story on a panel she said, "I'm crying, but not from sorrow. I am crying for joy! My story has been released and I share it now with the Universe. I hope it will help others."

For more than 40 years, I have listened to survivor stories, first as a school counselor and then as a forensic interviewer. Later, as a visiting instructor for Clemson University, I walked my graduate students through their first encounters of reporting and dealing with sexual abuse. Now I listen to the experiences of adult survivors. I don't find the stories. The stories find me.

My desire in every canvas is to have the viewer step into the survivor's story and imagine what it would be like to have lived that experience. My hope is that having seen the panels people will take action within their respective communities and find ways to answer the question, "What can I do right here, right now to help prevent sexual abuse in my own backyard?"

Many believe that sexual abuse happens "somewhere" but not here. Not in my neighborhood. Not to people I know. The reality is that sexual abuse happens everywhere all the time. No one and nowhere are exempt. Sexual abuse crosses all economic, ethnic, religious and racial lines. The next time you are dining in a restaurant, attending a concert, sitting in a house of worship, participating in a public meeting, walking down the street, having dinner with friends, picking up your children from school remember....one in four or one in six have a story.

Officially, April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Ethically, morally, spiritually.....**every** day is Child Abuse Prevention Day. Take time to educate yourself and to find ways to get involved. Prevention is the heart and soul of the work. Every time we put prevention in place....big or small....we can save a child from a trauma and each of those preventions means more safe kids right here, right now!

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## *Calendar considerations.....*

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### **Mountain Top Lectures**

Diana Butler Bass, May 16 and 17  
Rev. Fred Plummer, Summer 2014  
Rabbi Rami Shapiro, November 7 and 8  
Davidsonville, GA  
[www/mountaintoptlectures.org](http://www.mountaintoptlectures.org)

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### **The Anchorage**

Spring Quiet Day, Friday, April 4 – Greenville, SC  
Spring Directed 4-day group retreat, Monday, April 7 – Friday, April 11 at Mepkin Abbey  
[www.theanchorage.org](http://www.theanchorage.org)

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### **The Sophia Institute**

Solace with David Whyte, April 11 and 12  
The Book of Awakening, with Mark Nepo, May 16 to May 18  
Embodying the Sacred Woman through Love, Healing, and Empowerment, Dr. Christine Page, June 20 to 22  
Archeological Dig to your Heart, Jessica Boylston-Fagonde, June 13 to 14  
What is the SoulDream Calling You? Gloria Karpinski, July 11 to 12  
Charleston, SC  
[www.thesophiainstitute.org](http://www.thesophiainstitute.org)

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### **Interfaith Forum of Greenville**

National Day of Prayer, Thursday May 1, 2014 in cooperation with Furman University.  
<http://www.interfaithforum-sc.org>

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### **Holy Listening in a Circle of Trust**

An Introductory Retreat Based on the work of Parker Palmer  
Thursday, May 29 – Saturday, May 31  
St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Brevard, NC  
Karen Jackson and John Fenner, retreat leaders.  
For more information [john@couragerenewal.org](mailto:john@couragerenewal.org)

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### **Southern Dharma Retreats, Hot Springs, North Carolina**

The Nature of Awareness: Insight and Meditation for Experienced, April 25 – May 2  
Marriage of Yoga and Meditation, May 23 – May 26  
For more information about retreats and the schedule  
<http://www.southerndharma.org>

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### **Summer Dream and Spirituality Conference**

May 25 – 30, 2014  
Offered by the Haden Institute and held at Kanuga in Hendersonville, NC  
[www.hadeninstitute.com](http://www.hadeninstitute.com)

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## *Calendar considerations.....*

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### **Wild Goose Festival 2014**

June 26 – June 29, 2014

Hot Springs, NC

<http://wildgoosefestival.org>

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### **Kanuga**

FACE: Faith, Art, and Creative Expression, August 17 – 22

Lansing Lee Conference, Experiencing Eternity, Dr. Eden Alexander, October 26 – 28

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

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### **The Cathedral of St. Philip**

The New Emerging Spirituality with Dr. Lauren Artess, October 25

Atlanta, GA

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

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### **AwakeningSoul**

Seeking the Sacred Thread – Celebrating the Heart of Life

John Philip Newell and Barbara Brown Taylor

November 6 – 9

Lutheridge Conference Center

Asheville, NC

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

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### **Anderson School of Theology for Laypersons**

Dr. John Philip Newell, November 9, 2014

For more information <http://astlonline.org>

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### **Valle Crucis Conference Center**

Advanced Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat

November 30 – December 7

Valle Crucis, NC

<http://www.highsouth.com/vallecrucis/events.php4>

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Take a walk.....

    Dig in the dirt.....

        Stare into space.....

                    Enjoy the day.....





## 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 in this month's journal are my work. They were taken near the Sourwood Inn, Chestnut Ridge State Park, or in Maine.*