



---

# Living in the Balance

August 2012

---

The student schedules for next year lay in neat piles. Report cards and permanent records waited for teachers to pick up. I chewed my pencil and crossed off those items on my “end of the school year” list. One more week and I will have lived through my first year as a school counselor, I thought to myself. When I interviewed, I was twenty-three, the ink barely dry on my master’s degree. I was green as unripe tomatoes. But I had assured the former Marine drill instructor turned principal that what I lacked in experience, I could make up with determination and energy. And I did.

I looked up from my desk as she came in. Even with her head down, I recognized her as a rising ninth grader consistently on the honor roll. I assumed that she had some last minute scheduling question when she asked if I could talk and then closed my office door. For well over an hour she poured out what would be the worst case of sexual abuse that I would hear in my career. Tearing tissues, she said finally, “I cannot live in that all summer. I cannot live in that another minute. You have to help me.” I reassured her that I could help. I explained the process of reporting to social services and I told her that while the principal wouldn’t ask for details, I’d have to let him know I was making a report. She said, “I’ll tell him myself.”

The principal and I waited with her in his office for social services and the police to arrive. Having shed his gruff Marine exterior, the principal became comforter and protector. We never doubted her word. We never doubted our duty.

The next day, when I answered my office phone, the principal didn’t wait for hello. “Her father is here and he is looking for you. I’m sure he’s got a gun. I’ve called the police. Lock the outer office door and your office door. Don’t move until I call again.”

The police came and the father didn’t return to the school again, but I knew that, as the crow flies, his house was about three miles from where I lived. I didn’t go home that night. And I didn’t stop looking over my shoulder until the court hearings were long over.

When I trained professionals on reporting abuse, I set up a variety of scenarios to check their understanding of the reporting laws. Sometimes, the alleged perpetrator was described as an upstanding, influential member of the community. Sometimes, the suspect did shift work and lived in a rundown house. The audience was more likely to doubt the word of the child when the allegations involved someone of power and authority. The professionals’ reservations made them less likely to report the allegations. But impotence in action keeps kids at risk.

Penn State happens everywhere. On my street. On yours. In schools. In churches. In rec clubs. In gated neighborhoods and mobile home parks. In cities and rural areas. Abuse cuts across every social economic, racial and ethnic stratum. The data report that one in four girls and one in seven boys are sexually abused or assaulted before the age of eighteen.

Forty years later, I am still haunted by the words of my student. “My father nailed the windows shut so we couldn’t get out.”

Speaking the truth to power has consequences. Someone can literally come gunning for you. By law, I am a mandatory reporter and so are many of the officials at Penn State. But the truth is that each of us must wear the mantle of mandatory reporter. See what you see. Own what you know. And report it. Team and tribe trumped truth at Penn State. Silence colluded with evil. Children suffered and the suffering continues until we speak. And only then can healing begin.

©Wanda Meade

*The perpetrator in this case is dead. The house where my student lived is no longer standing. She had courage beyond courage. I am grateful that she trusted me with her story.*

Child abuse  
casts a  
shadow the  
length of a  
lifetime.

*Herbert Ward*



---

## *Calendar considerations.....*

---

### ***The Sophia Institute***

Beauty, Eros and Wisdom, August 3  
Love and Spiritual Healing, August 31 and September 1, Bell Hooks, presenter  
Charleston, South Carolina  
[www.thesophiainstitute.org](http://www.thesophiainstitute.org)

---

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

John Selby Spong – Saturday, August 4, at 9:30 and 1:00 at Clemson United Methodist Church.  
Dr. James Carroll – Sunday, September 30, at 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Boulevard Baptist Church, Anderson, SC. ASTL Pre-Lecture Symposium: The Future of Progressive Theology – Saturday, September 29, 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Dr. Carroll will present the keynote lecture on Saturday morning as part of this symposium. Other presenters are Dr. Jerry Wright and Dr. Fred Plumer.  
For more information [www.astlonline.org](http://www.astlonline.org)

---

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

Gateway to the Profound Mind of Enlightenment, August 2 -5  
The Nature of Awareness: Insight Meditation for Experienced Meditators, August 10 – 17  
Opening the Heart: Meditations on Love and Compassion, August 31 – September 3  
Seeing Clearly: The Heart of Vipassana Practice, September 8 –13  
Answering the Call to Love, September 27 – 30  
The Power of Presence: A Metta Retreat, October 5 – 10  
For more information contact Carol Meyer at [southerndharma@earthlink.net](mailto:southerndharma@earthlink.net)

---

### **Save the Date! Dream Conference**

Friday Evening, November 9, and Saturday, November 10  
First Baptist Church, Greenville, SC

---

### **A Mini Course on Wisdom with Cynthia Bourgeault**

Saturday, October 13  
Cathedral of All Souls, Asheville, NC  
For more information, contact Robbin Whittington at [robbin@allsouls cathedral.org](mailto:robbin@allsouls cathedral.org)  
<http://thecsr.org/event/2012-zabriskie-learning-series-presents-a-mini-course-on-wisdom/>

---

### **Spirituality and Practice**

Continuing to offer on-demand on-line programs and courses.....Rabbi Rami, James Hollis, Sr. Joan Chittister, Sylvia Boorstein and many others.  
[www.spiritualityandpractice.com](http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com)

---

### **Abbey of the Arts**

On-line courses for the fall....  
Women at the Threshold: The Wild Heart Longing – dates to be announced  
Way of the Monk, Path of the Artist, September 3 – November 25  
Live It to Give It: Soul Nourishment and Self Care – dates to be announced.  
For more information <http://abbeyofthearts.com>





---

## *Calendar considerations.....*

---

### **Welcoming Prayer Retreat**

October 5 – 7

St. Francis Springs Prayer Center, Stoneville, NC

For more information contact Robin Britt at [cbritt@triad.rr.com](mailto:cbritt@triad.rr.com)

---

### **Rabbi Rami Shapiro**

“Biblical Wisdom for Post-Biblical Times: Learning to Read the Bible like a Mystic”

October 12 – 14

The Episcopal Convent of Saint Helena, Augusta, Georgia

For more information <http://www.osh.org>

(Rabbi Shapiro writes a monthly column for Spirituality and Health Magazine and is the author of numerous books.)

---

### **Lansing Lee Conference with Eric Metaxas**

October 28 – 30

Kanuga, Hendersonville SC

For more information [www.kanuga.org](http://www.kanuga.org)

---

### **2012 Lake Junaluska Peace Conference, Love in Action: The Transformative Power of Nonviolence**

November 8 – 11, 2012

2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Ms. Leymah Gbowee will headline the conference.

[www.lakejunaluska.com](http://www.lakejunaluska.com)

---

### **Advanced Centering Prayer Retreat**

Becky Hannah, facilitating

Sunday, November 25 – Sunday, December 2

Valle Crucis Retreat Center, Valle Crucis, NC

[www.highsouth.com/vallecrucis/](http://www.highsouth.com/vallecrucis/)

---

### **Looking into 2013!**

Transforming Trauma: Contemplative Approaches to Spiritual Healing, Friday, April 12, 9:30 – 12:30 p.m.

Led by James Finley at St. Michael Archangel Catholic Church, Cary, NC

Through the Narrow Gate, a silent retreat led by James Finley who will let the mystic teachings from Christianity, Buddhism and other traditions be the guides.

Friday, April 12 at 5:00 p.m. until Sunday, April 14 at noon.

St. Francis Springs Prayer Center, Stoneville, NC.

<http://jamesfinleynorthcarolina.org>

---

Individual retreats at **Well of Mercy** in Hamptonville, NC

(north of Statesville and west of Winston-Salem)

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

The Hermitages at Valle Crucis are available for personal spiritual retreats

[www.highsouth.com/vallecrucis/](http://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](mailto:wmeade@meadellc.com)

Wanda Meade, M.Ed., Licensed Professional Counselor  
Completed Haden Institute in Spiritual Direction Program  
PO Box 14940  
Greenville, SC 29610

*All the photos in this journal are my work. The photo on the opening page was taken near the cliffs in Canyon de Chelly National Park in Arizona. The food photos were taken on Rue de Cler in Paris.....what incredible fruits and vegetables. The flowers are in the flower markets in Paris and Amsterdam.*

