



Living in the Balance

June 2013

Three-hole punch. Group. Copy back and front. Twenty copies. I tap the “finish” key. I watch as the UPS copy machine sucks the original pages into the feeder. I listen for the swish, swish, swish of the pages. I have ten more sets to copy. Another twenty minutes and I’ll be done.

I hear the bell ring and the door to the UPS Store swings open. I turn and there is Charlie. “Hey young lady,” he says to me and smiles his broad grin pushing the door open widely as he leans forward on his cane.

“We are both out of place this morning. I’m here at UPS making copies. And you’re not at Publix,” I say.

“No, not there yet. Got something I got to do today and I must get it done. How long you gonna be here?” Charlie asks holding papers in his hand.

“About 20 more minutes,” I reply.

“Perfect. God is good. God is good. I need help with something and here you are. Can you use your beautiful handwriting to fill in what I tell you on these sheets? It’s a recommendation for a summer job for a wonderful young woman I’ve known since she was a tiny girl. I’ll have to read it to you. I can’t write anymore. My hands are so crippled with arthritis...old and worn out like the rest of me.”

For the next ten minutes, Charlie and I decipher his handwriting and he signs the pages.

“Ready to go! Thank you so much. God is good. I needed an angel and here you are.”

‘Angel’ is not a word that most people associate with me, but I don’t say this to Charlie. Instead, I hug him and smile, “I’ll see you at Publix.” For the last few years, Charlie has been bagging my groceries and wheeling them to my car. Charlie welcomes and chats with everyone who comes into Publix. He calls people “dear” and “young lady.” He coos at the babies and chats with the old folks and the college students like he’s known them forever. “You be safe now!” are his parting words as he closes your car door or trunk. Then he leans his twisted hands and his bent body on the cart, rolling it back to the store chatting with everyone and smiling on the way.

Last October, I opened the Greenville News to a headline, “Porter receives Silver Crescent” and there was a picture of Charlie...my Publix Charlie. I suddenly realized that Charlie and I knew each other in another life. Charles Porter was a police officer when I started working at Easley Junior High in the early ‘70’s. He was half of the duo known as, “Salt and Pepper.” Charlie Porter (Salt) and his African American partner, Charlie Austin (Pepper) were known throughout the city as the best of the best. Everyone in town knew them, especially the kids in the schools. As I read, I discovered that Charlie had served in the Air Force, was a leader for veterans’ causes, led the local and state American Legion, and was inducted into the National Police Hall of Fame. The Order of the South Carolina Silver Crescent is awarded to people “who make a significant contribution to a particular city or community.”

The next time I saw Charlie at Publix, I told him and the cashier that I had seen the article in the paper and discovered that he and I went way back. “And do you know that Charlie has just received one of the highest awards in the state for service?” I said, pleased for him. Charlie gee hawed around shaking his head. “I loved my work. I’d go back to it in a minute if I could. But I’m too old and crippled up now and been shot at too many times. Can’t believe you remember me and that rascal Charlie Austin,” he laughs. “We had some times. Yes we did. Got a million stories. I want to write a book before I go. Yes I do. I didn’t do anything great. Just did what I loved. Was really humbled to get that award. Never needed that. The work was enough.”

Charlie wouldn’t see himself as anyone’s angel, just a man following his passion. But for each of us who benefitted from his life of outpouring service, he’s more than earned his wings.

© Wanda Meade



Calendar considerations.....

Southern Dharma Retreats, Hot Springs, North Carolina

Unfettering the natural mind: The path of clear seeing, June 1 – 8

A Marriage of Yoga and Meditation, June 18 – 23

Insight Dialogue and the Path of Peace, July 5 – 10

Mindfulness: The Path to Freedom, July 26 – 31

For more information about retreats and the schedule <http://www.southerndharma.org>

The Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta, Georgia

An Evening with Macrina Wiederkehr: Finding the Monastic Heart: A Way to God

Thursday, June 27 at 6:30 p.m.

A Day with Cynthia Bourgeault: The Holy Trinity Reconsidered – Harnessing the Power of Three

Saturday, October 26

Contact Jeannie Mahood for more information jmahood@stphilipscathedral.org

The Sophia Institute in Charleston, South Carolina

Healing from the Inside Out with Christine Page, June 21 – 23, 2013

Cultivating the Inner Landscape of Self Discovery, June 28 – 29

<http://www.thesophiainstitute.org>

SOULfeast

July 14 – 18, 2013

Featured speaker will be Trevor Hudson

Lake Junaluska Retreat Center

<http://www.lakejunaluska.com/soulfeast>

2013 Columbia Theological Seminary Lecture Series

“The Role of Religion and Race in U.S. Politics: A Post-Election Conversation on Christian Faith and Public Life”

July 15–27 at Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, NC

<http://www.montreat.org/current/2013-columbia-theological-seminary-lecture-series>

8-Day Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat

St. Mary's Retreat Center, Sewanee, TN

July 28 – August 4

Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee

<http://www.centeringprayermidtn.com>

Wildgoose Festival

Wild Goose is a community gathered at the intersection of justice, spirituality, music and art. Our main annual event is a 4-day, outdoor festival hosted each summer in North Carolina. A wide range of interesting speakers.

August 8 – 11, 2013 in Hot Springs, NC

<http://wildgoosefestival.org>

Fr. Carl Arico

Offered by Centering Prayer of Charlotte, NC

Saturday, September 21, 2013, 9:30 until 3:30

St. Gabriel Catholic Church, Charlotte, NC

<http://cpcharlotte.org/events.php>





Calendar considerations.....

Anderson School of Theology for Laypersons

Rev. Michael Dowd, October 13, 2013
Dr. Walter Brueggemann, February 16, 2014
Dr. John Philip Newell, November 9, 2014
For more information <http://astlonline.org>

Iona Pilgrimage with Jungian analyst Jerry Wright

September 20 through October 1, 2013
For more information contact Jerry at jwright@morrisbb.net

Lansing Lee Conference

Blue Ridge Tales: Stories of Survival, Healing and Faith featuring Rev. Becca Stevens
October 20 – 22, 2013
Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, NC
www.kanuga.org

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia
October 8 – 10, 2013
Tickets and information at dalailama.emory.edu

Kanuga Conference Center

Icon Writing, November 16 – 22
Enneagram Conference, December 5 – 8
Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, NC
www.kanuga.org

Modern Mind ~ Ancient Soul

Thursday evening, November 7 – lunch Sunday, November 10
Offered by AwakeningSoul
Presenters: Lauren Winner and Jungian analyst, Jerry Wright
Lutheridge Conference Center, Asheville, NC
For more information <http://www.awakeningsoulpresents.org/awakeningsoul-events>

The Anchorage offers programs throughout the year in Greenville.
www.theanchorage.org

The Hermitages at Valle Crucis in Valle Crucis, NC

Offers wonderful spaces for private retreats.
<http://vallecrucishermitages.blogspot.com/>

The Monastery of St. Clare

Travelers Rest, SC
Offers quiet retreat time and space.
<http://poorclaresc.com/zzz/ministries/retreat-house/>





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

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

The photo on the front page is taken from the Greenville News article about Charles Porter as he received the Order of the South Carolina Crescent from State Representative Garry Smith. All the other photos are my work and were taken in Melbourne, Australia. There are two alleyways that are filled with graffiti. I promise more scenic photos in an upcoming journal.

