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# Living in the Balance

November 2011

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*It is not the end  
of the physical  
body that  
should worry  
us. Rather, our  
concern must  
be to live while  
we're alive - to  
release our  
inner selves  
from the  
spiritual death  
that comes with  
living behind a  
facade  
designed to  
conform to  
external  
definitions of  
who and what  
we are.*

Elisabeth Kubler-  
Ross

Several years ago, a friend of mine shared a dream she had about Lazarus, and I have been thinking about Lazarus off and on ever since. Many of us know the Bible story, and I think we like to skip right to the part about Jesus resurrecting Lazarus from the dead. But I find myself thinking about Lazarus in a tomb....a cave.....for four days. Bound. In the dark. Dead. I can relate. I've found myself feeling in the dark and dead more than one time in my life. One of my deepest caves was when my mother was so ill, and I was working in a difficult situation for a woman who was certifiable. Every day, I felt like I couldn't breathe. I was gripped. Claustrophobic. Panicked. Scared witless. Cut off. Separate. Dante also knew this tomb time: "Midway this way of life we're bound upon, I woke to find myself in a dark wood, where the right road was wholly lost and gone....It is so bitter it goes nigh to death." And like Dante, I was lost without a map. No sense of my self.....my purpose.....my path. I have found these times to be barren and so alone. And if you try to talk to anyone, many times they want to talk you out of the woods with platitudes, or they will try to hand you their map.

So I have found myself in the cave again recently surrounded by some of my usual cast of characters. There's Crusader Rabbit. She is always looking for a wrong to right, so she has tilted at many a windmill and had her tail shot off in more than one "throw down." She binds herself with disappointment and hurt. And there is Screw Yew. She's a hedonistic who says, "Let's just kick back and let the world implode on itself. What difference does it make? Grab the good times." She binds herself with anger and shields herself from disappointment. And Googling Gopher is constantly pouring through websites seeking knowledge "out there in cyberspace" that might solve the current issue or give some new insight. She binds herself with distraction and thinking, thinking, thinking. My soul gets completely overwhelmed, and I hear myself saying to the Divine, "Please don't leave me in here with *them* again!"

But "again" is the point. The cave and the lost wood are over and over experiences, not one time events. It's not the same old same old. The feelings and the bindings are familiar, but this time and this work are at a deeper level. It's a spiral. A deeper dig. Oh, yes, I thought I had it figured out the last time I emerged from cave time, but as the monks in the monastery say, "We stand up. We fall down. We stand up. We fall down."

Wisdom will call me to the cave again and again and seal the door. It will be time for new work. Can I sit long enough to listen? Wisdom will ask the same cave questions from a new place. "What has *this* cave time come to teach me?" "What are the names of *these* bindings?" "What will be the new learning?" "Where do I go from here?" "What is the map for this leg of the journey?"

When I came out of the cave of my mother's illness and my certifiable boss, Crusader Rabbit knew that she had to find a new place to work and that there would be other kids in a new place. And Googling Gopher knew that while she could not find a cure for my mother, there were ways to make the ending more peaceful. And Screw Yew's more centered side would be the one who helped me find the humor and the light in the darkest places. And while I might not have mounted up with wings as eagles or walked without fainting, I did emerge and begin to trust the new road Wisdom had put before me. And that's the journey over and over again for me and you. New caves and dark woods, each leading to new learnings and fresh light.

©Wanda Meade



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## *Calendar considerations.....*

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### **Amazing Faiths Dinner Dialogues**

A project designed to find common ground between people of diverse faiths  
Thursday evening, November 17, 2011, 6:30 until 9:30

Offered by Interfaith Forum, Greenville Forward and NEXUS Center

For more information go to [www.interfaithforum-sc.org](http://www.interfaithforum-sc.org) or contact Joel Sprague at 864-346-3107  
Register by November 7!!

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### **Peace Conference – Poverty, Abundance, and Peace: Seeking Economic Justice for All God’s Children**

Speakers include Senator George McGovern, Dr. David Beckman (president of Bread for the World),  
And Bishop Nkula Ntamblo of the Katanga Conference in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.  
November 13 – 15, 2011

For more information, go to [www.lakejunaluska.com](http://www.lakejunaluska.com)

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### **The Snail’s Pace in Saluda, North Carolina**

Advent Retreat, December 2 – 4

Bring in the New Year at Snail’s Pace, December 31 – January 2, 2012

Consider an individual day long retreat time away

For more information go to [www.thesnailspace.org](http://www.thesnailspace.org)

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### **Southern Dharma Retreat Center in Hot Springs, North Carolina**

Vipassana Meditation with Yoga, November 15 – 20

New Year’s Retreat, December 26 – January 2

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

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### **A Time of Awakening**

November 28 through December 2, 2011

A Five Day Retreat with Carolyn Rivers and Henk Brandt

Coming in February..... Lynn McTaggart, author of *The Bond*

The Sophia Institute in Charleston, SC <http://thesohpiainstitute.org>

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### **Awakening the Soul Advent 2011 – December 4 -8**

John Philip Newell is the featured presenter

Lutheridge Retreat Center, Asheville NC

<http://www.llmi.net/adult/advent2011.aspx>

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### **The Order of Saint Helena Episcopal Convent**

I Have Called You by Name: An Advent Retreat, December 9 – December 11

For more information go to [www.osh.org](http://www.osh.org)

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## *Other Events .....*

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### **Kanuga in Hendersonville, NC**

Krista Tippett host of NPR's "On Being" formerly "Speaking of Faith" will keynote Lansing Lee Conference Listening to Faith, December 4 – 6  
For more information see [www.kanuga.org](http://www.kanuga.org)

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### **Abbey of the Arts offering a variety of on-line courses**

Some of the offerings include "Soul Care Institute," "Advent 2011: Birthing the Holy, Becoming a Monk in the World," "Way of the Monk, Path of the Artist," and "Eyes of the Heart....photography as a contemplative practice."

For information see [www.abbeyofhearts.com](http://www.abbeyofhearts.com)

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### **Contemplative Wisdom School with Cynthia Bourgeault**

This is a Wisdom School being offered at Valle Crucis near Boone, NC  
You must attend both "schools" which are being offered on October 13 – 18, 2012 and March 10 – 14, 2013. Even though these are more than a year away, if you have interest, I suggest contacting Robbin Whittington at 828-274-2681 or [robbin@thecsr.org](mailto:robbin@thecsr.org) soon!

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### **Spirituality and Practice E-Courses**

Centering Prayer with Cynthia Bourgeault, November 7 – December 2  
Practicing Spirituality a 40-day e-course based on Buddhist meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg  
Many other e-courses available.  
[www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ecourses](http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ecourses)

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### **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](mailto:jwright@morrisbb.net) or call 770-656-3818

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### **Engaging Faith Conference featuring Brian McLaren and Yvette Flunder**

Friday evening, February 24 and all day Saturday, February 25, 2012

Offered by NEXUS and to be held at Furman University.

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### **Life in the Second Half --- The Bowen Conference**

Featuring the Rev. Margaret Guenther and the Very Rev. Alan Jones

February 27 – 29, 2012

Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, NC

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





## 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. The images are all from Ireland. Some are old ruins. Others are burial sites, graves, or from crypts in cathedrals.*