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# Living in the Balance

November 2014

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We were all 19 and two-thirds of the way through our freshman year at East Carolina when she was killed in a car accident outside Raleigh in a freak, March snowstorm. Her funeral was in eastern Maryland and as we rode with her parents to the visitation that long ago Friday evening, her mother said to us, "Last evening, I saw the most remarkable sunset. I just stared at the beauty in the colors and knew that I would not have Sue, but I would always have the sunsets to remind me of her. I will always have that."

*Bless-ed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.*

My high school students went to the graves of their friends and their family. They sat on the ground crossed-legged and carried on conversations. Around a holiday, they might bring a pumpkin or a Valentine heart or a small Christmas tree. "Is that weird, Ms. Meade? Do you think it's crazy to talk to my dead granny? Sometimes I cry. Sometimes I laugh. Sometimes, I need to know something only she can answer. I might be weird, but sometimes I just lay on the grave. I don't care what other people think. I have something to say and I tell her. I think she hears. Do you think she hears, Ms. Meade? Well, it doesn't matter 'cause I think she does."

*Bless-ed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.*

"She died, Wanda. My mother died in her own bed reading a book. My aunt said she looked like she was asleep. She had finished her Christmas pies and they were in the freezer. I don't think she thought she was going to die. Please tell me that this is going to get better." I reply simply, "I can't say it gets better.....I can say that it will get different." I hear her sigh over the phone, "Well, I do know that she went just like she wanted to and that is a good thing."

*Bless-ed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.*

It has been six years since her "just shy of 40" year-old son died from a sudden illness. "If only" took up residence in her heart. "If only I had made him go to the doctor." "If only he hadn't traveled so much." She shared the regrets with me and then said, "We liked to talk over chocolate chip cookies and ale. And whenever I would express regret or anxiety over something that had happened in the past he'd say, 'Mom.....don't dwell.' I remember those wise words. It helps get me through."

*Bless-ed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.*

The grass had not yet grown over the ground on her older son's grave, when she hears the soulful strums of her younger son's guitar, playing a lament without words. The music mends the moment.

*Bless-ed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.*

"Are you coming back?" she asks. I look at her oddly. "Of course, Mom, as soon as we grab supper, I'll be back. I'm spending the night remember?" "OK. See you soon," she said. When I returned and rounded the corner of the hospital corridor, the nurse waves frantically. "Her blood pressure has dropped to almost nothing! Hurry!" My mother was there quietly waiting for me. She looked at me one last time and I held her hand as her spirit left her body. Twenty years later I clearly remember her small hand in mine and her soft surrender. Remembering all this each time I make chocolate chip bars and her holiday cranberry salad.

*Bless-ed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.*

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## *Calendar considerations.....*

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### **Women in Islam: Four Muslim Women On Questions about Islam, Gender and Society**

Furman University, Johns Hall Room 101  
Wednesday, November 5 at 7:00 p.m.  
Free and open to the public

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### **Cynthia Bourgeault On-line Course**

Spiritual Practices from the Gurdjieff Work

Offered by Spirituality and Practice

Begins Monday, November 3 and runs through November 28

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ecourses/ecourses.php?id=181&key=sp>

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

Dr. John Philip Newell, November 9, 2014

Speaking at 3:00 and at 7:00 p.m. Two different lectures

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

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Consider a quiet time away on retreat.

The Poor Clares Monastery in Travelers Rest, SC

Mepkin Abbey in Moncks Corners, SC

The Hermitages at Valle Crucis, NC

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### **Contemplative Outreach of Piedmont NC**

Welcoming Prayer Workshop

Saturday, November 15, St. Gabriel Catholic Church, Charlotte, NC

Advanced Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat

November 30 – December 7

Valle Crucis Conference Center, NC

Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat

St. Mary's Retreat Center, Sewanee, TN

January 4 – January 11, 2015

For more information on all events, <http://copnc.org/>

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### **The Sophia Institute**

The Awakening Heart, the Contemplative Alliance, November 7 and 8

Sister Joan Chittister is part of this weekend event!

Charleston, SC

[www.thesophia institute.org](http://www.thesophia institute.org)

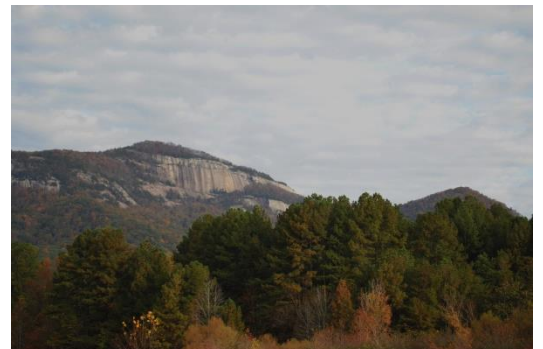
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### **Southern Dharma Retreats, Hot Springs, North Carolina**

Transforming the Judgmental Mind, November 8 – 14

For more information about retreats and the schedule

<http://www.southerndharma.org>





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## *Calendar considerations.....*

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### **Mountain Top Lectures**

Rabbi Rami Shapiro, November 7 and 8  
Davidsonville, GA  
[www/mountaintoplectures.org](http://www/mountaintoplectures.org)

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### **The Emergence Retreat**

November 7 – 9

Outdoor Lab in Clemson, SC

Providing a space where LGBTQ young adults can come together with their families and supportive faith communities for the purpose of promoting love, acceptance and understanding.

Sponsored by Peace Congregational Church UCC Pendleton

<http://emergenceretreat.com>

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### **On-line retreats with Abbey of the Arts**

Birthing the Holy: Advent and Christmas Retreat with Monks, Mystics, and Archetypes

November 30 – January 15

Illuminating the Way: Epiphany and New Year Retreat with Monks, Mystics and Archetypes

January 4 – February 7, 2015

Many other on-line courses including the arts and photography.

<http://abbeyofthearts.com/classes/online-classes/>

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### **Iconography: The Gospel in Line and Color**

February 21 – 27

Kanuga Retreat Center, Hendersonville, NC

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

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Oprah continues her Super Soul Sundays....just watched Pema Chodron's interview and Marianne Williamson is coming up. You can see them on-line if you miss them on Sundays.

<http://www.oprah.com/app/super-soul-sunday.html>

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If I started listing my blessings at this season of thanks, I would need a lot more time and paper. Blessings to each of you.





## 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. The cover photo is of my mother with my niece and nephews. They are all grown and in their 30's now. I still make chocolate chip bars for them and cranberry salad. The rest of the photos were taken at Caesar's Head a couple of years ago.*

