



Living in the Balance

October 2011

*Everywhere I
go.....*

*I get slandered,
libeled....*

*I hear words I
never heard in
the Bible....*

Simon and
Garfunkel

Remember “slam” books of the early ‘60’s? Yes, the junior high combination of *The National Inquirer* and the Holy Grail. Regardless of the cover, which could be plain or sequined, the “innards” were all alike. At the top of each page was a question. “Have you ever cheated on your boyfriend? Give details!” “Who is the hottest couple?” “Who is the biggest bitch in this school?” “What do you really think about Wanda Meade?” “Who have you spread a rumor about and why?” Those wishing to make an entry had a “sign in” number and after making comments on a page, they used their number rather than their name as their signature. Such anonymity allowed you to *really* write what your twelve-year-old mind thought with *total, total* honesty and without taking any responsibility or bearing any consequence. In typical junior high fashion, this truth telling was more like a bloodletting and frequently involved lots of swearing and name calling via a hit and run vehicle driven by meanness, cruelty, and vindictiveness.

I’m not proud to admit it, but I had a slam book as did almost all of my Mt. Rainer Junior High friends. Fortunately, our fascination with slam books was brief, but like a tornado, though short lived, the damage was deep. I see now that it had the potential for a profound wounding of a soul, and I wonder if the wreckage was ever repaired. Today, we have internet slam books and the electronic web of opportunity for massive soul wounding. Pick, click, and slam cloaked under the veil of screen names.

When I write a letter to the editor, I have to claim my authorship or the paper will not print it. But interestingly, others can go on the newspaper’s website and write a comment under my letter using some fictitious on-line name, assuming, of course, that “Miss Gotta be Hotta” and “Mr. Hunkahunka” are not given names. While I really don’t care whether anyone agrees with my writing or not, what bothers me is that people can say what they want without having to claim their opinions as their own. And the media and many citizens defend it. A part of the collective says, “Honestly, Wanda, get a grip, girl....this is free speech in the USA. It’s in the Constitution!” Say what you want, when you want, to whomever you want has become the motto and mantra of the internet. Feel free to tell me to “fuck off.” If I don’t like it, then too bad because, “It’s my right to free speech, bitch.”

Somehow we think we are speaking into a vacuum. But our speech has energy. It vibrates. It has life. And once released, rage and vitriol language impact everything they touch. Trying to pull that ugly energy back is like trying to put feathers back in a pillow in the middle of a wind storm. It’s impossible. And I’m not immune to the desire to do some spewing of my own. The entire time I’ve been writing this piece, there has been an uproar via email, and it has taken everything in me not to jump into the fray. But I know the power of words. And once I hit “send” there is no “do over.”

I also know that my words impact me as well. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is inconsequential to the interconnectedness of humanity. I can cloak myself in a *nomme du plume*, but deep in my soul I know that when I wound you, I cut my own spirit’s center. I’ve lost something of my inner Light when I seek to smother yours. Our internet postings are ours..... light or dark....screen name or no....they build up or harm the whole.

Free speech is a deception. A hoax. Sticks and stones will break our bones, and words have the power to hurt, wound, cut, and leave us bleeding. Internet postings aren’t innocent. They aren’t just “slamming” in fun. We aren’t playing a game of no harm, no foul. People can truly hang on our words.....like the college student who.....sadly for us all.....used a rope. ©Wanda Meade



Other Events

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

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

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 soon!

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>

Spirituality and Practice E-Courses

Contemplative Discernment, October 10 – November 4
Creating Your Life with James Hollis, October 10 – November 4
Centering Prayer with Cynthia Bourgeault, November 7 – December 2
www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ecourses

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

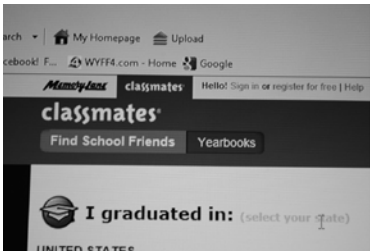
Engaging Faith Conference featuring Brian McLaren and Yvette Flunder

Friday evening, February 24 and all day Saturday, February 25, 2012
Offered by NEXUS and to be held at Furman University.

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





About Spiritual Direction —

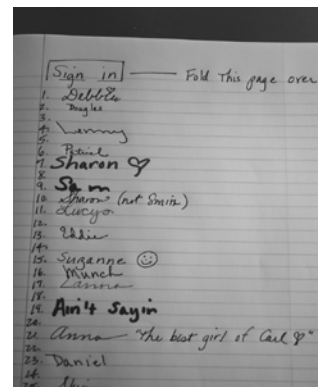
- Offers a space and time for you to explore, reflect upon, and deepen your relationship with God.
- Provides a haven from the daily busyness of the outer world and opens a time to be still and to reflect on your inner journey.
- Is a companioning relationship grounded in dialogue and discernment.
- 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

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The photos are my work. The images are taken from items in my home or "mocked up" for this journal. Some were pulled up from the internet and photographed looking at my computer screen.....