



# The Source

Spring 2009

Newsletter of the Spiritual Life Center

Volume 20 - Number Two

## Fond Farewell...

Over the past four and a half years, those of you who have called the Spiritual Life Center have been greeted with: "Spiritual Life Center, Hope speaking." Hope has indeed been in our community in a very tangible way in the person of Hope Valiska. She has served in an ever growing and demanding position of administrative assistant, office manager and Administrative and Financial Leader.

We are grateful for the attention to detail, the organizational monitoring, the list and calendar keeping, the editing of the newsletter that have helped us maintain a presence in the community. Hope's love of numbers and technology have been a gift to keeping us good financial stewards. Thanks to Hope's efforts, we have recently procured a grant for

our new printer/copy machine. The staff, the board and the community have all been blessed by Hope's initiative, service and warm welcome.

Now the mother of Rylie Grace, Hope will be leaving us and taking on a new position at the end of June at the West Hartford Chamber of Commerce. We will miss her presence and personality and we bless her as she goes on her way.

we are born  
of earth and time  
with the spirit  
of balance  
to keep us in line.  
~ hv ~



## Formation in Supervision



This past spring, Mary Blume, Andree Grafstein and Cathy Murtha, DW offered a five week program in

the Formation in Supervision. The program helped experienced spiritual directors in developing their skills as supervisors through selected readings, learning sessions, as well as individual and peer supervision.

The experience proved intense as the group gathered on Tuesday evenings from 4:00 to 9:00 pm. A supper break offered time for relaxation and informal getting to know one another better. As usual when a group gathers at the Center conversation is significant, and community grows. The participants found the opportunity helpful and meaningful. The team was delighted with the experience of forming and welcoming new supervisors who can continue to grow our ministry of spiritual direction.

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## Leadership Team

Cathleen Murtha, DW  
*Pastoral Discernment Leader*

Hope Valiska  
*Administrative & Financial Leader*

Sarah Annis  
*Events & Program Cultivation Leader*

Andrée Grafstein  
*Internship Coordinator*

Rose Petronella  
*Pathways Coordinator*

## Board of Directors

Joanne White  
*President*

Rosemary Reynolds  
*Secretary*

Richard Watson  
*Treasurer*

David Blume

Patricia Curtis

Pamela Morrison-Wolf

Melissa Morriss-Olson

Sara Jane Munshower

David Oat

Deborah Pallatto-Fontaine

Andrea Rowe

## Mission

The Spiritual Life Center is a community born of faith, gathered in Love and led by the Spirit to seek oneness with the Mystery that is God.

We are called to tend the Holy in the souls of individuals, groups, and the world by cooperating with God to invite and nurture, equip and sustain, heal and transform, through the ministry of spiritual direction.

# From the Director's Desk...

*Perhaps real wisdom lies in not seeking answers at all.  
After all these years I have begun to wonder  
if the secret of living well is not in having all the answers,  
but in pursuing unanswerable questions in good company.*

These words of author, leader and wise woman, Rachel Naomi Remen, caught my attention. I have been reflecting on the activity of the Spiritual Life Center these past two months. It was been a particularly vibrant time when we have balanced both the times of ending for the summer and the possibilities of new life and growth for the future.

Early May we celebrated the last class for the Pathways of Spirituality and the Spiritual Direction Internship. These two intensive programs raise deep questions about how to negotiate life in awareness, service, and community in a way that respects the movement of the Spirit and the demands of one's life.

In-service programs for spiritual directors and pastoral leaders are raising question on The Shadow and the Mystery of Evil, working through Grief, learning to talk and listen to folks across a vast faith experience.

This spring a renewed Formation in Supervision program was implemented for those feeling called to help other spiritual directors in their growth and development as spiritual guides and companions. Once again the questions morph from what to do toward how to be present and attentive to one another in a manner that is every more free and open.

The first two weeks of June found several groups celebrating brunch, lunch or supper on the porch as Peer Supervision groups took a summer break. Even as blessings and challenges were acknowledged, the questions tended to be more about summer travel, good books to read and how to enjoy some down time.

A rather poignant conversation arose within the Open Circle group among the women who were wives and widows of World War II veterans. The wondered about the effects of war on those in harm's way at so young an age and the memory and scars and secrets their husbands carried.

As we move into summer, I wonder what are the questions you holding this season. Are there urgent ones that really need concrete answers and actions? Are there other ones that tend to lead to some reflection and contemplation? Are some just begging for a hearing in "good company"?

I pray that these months offer you some opportunity of living with those deeper questions and sharing with some fine companions in the midst of the beauty and abundance of the season.

Cathleen Murtha, DW  
*Pastoral Discernment Leader*

# Revisiting the Center's Strategic Plan

Board and staff members of the Spiritual Life Center met on retreat in early February with the goal of reviewing and revising our strategic plan. By noon, we realized that, 1) we have accomplished much in the past year, and 2) there is still much more to be done. Words from one of Robert Frost's poems echoed in my consciousness: *The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep...and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep.*

We moved into the afternoon buoyed up by hope and enthusiasm, eager to build on the work that had been completed successfully. Each of the seven points of our Seven-Point Plan was addressed by a small work group whose members were charged with addressing current tactics that had not been executed and/or developing new, additional tactics. We sensed the need to focus in two particular areas of the Seven-Point Plan...outreach and finance...yet keep pressing forward with the others.

The seven strategies with one or two or no specific examples of objectives/tactics are:

- \* Equip and sustain the community of Spiritual Directors. Equip Spiritual Directors and Supervisors by offering in-service, interfaith seminars twice a year. Sustain program graduates by celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Spiritual Directors' Internship Program.

- \* Expand relationships that focus on the sharing and exploration of spiritual experience across faith communities. Expand relationships with the Jewish community by exploring the use of co-facilitators for in-service seminars. Expand relationships with the

Muslim community by involving speakers in the Internship and Pathways Programs.

- \* Expand marketing and public relations for the Center. Further utilize our promotional DVD by airing our 3-part DVD on additional community public TV stations. *Note: if you would like a copy of our DVD to explain and promote the Center and spiritual direction, please contact the office via phone or e-mail.*

- \* Solidify administrative and Board structures. Develop short- and long-term succession plans. Recruit additional Board members. *Note: If you have an interest in becoming a Board or Board Committee member, please contact me.*

- \* Assure financial viability of the Center. Create a planned giving strategy. Secure grants for technology and programs.

- \* Create new places for our work. Develop satellite locations for spiritual direction. Take our capabilities/workshops "on the road."

- \* Expand our programming that invites and nurtures. Conduct a needs survey for the wider community. Continue improving and supplementing our long- and short-term programs.

As we closed our retreat, I was extremely thankful for the energy and dedication given to the Center by its staff and Board members. And the words of e.e. cummings returned to me once again: *I thank you God, for most this amazing day.* May we move forward, with God's grace, to make it an amazing year.

written by Joanne White  
SLC Board President

## SAVE THE DATE

### Fall InService: Topic: Grief

Presenter:s: Joe and Louise Colletti

Thursday, October 15, 2009 9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.  
REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 9:00 A.M.

Location: Sisters of St. Joseph, Corner of Park Rd. & Prospect Ave.

Suggested Donation: \$50, Lunch will be provided.

## Pathways of Spirituality - Fall 2009

The Pathways of Spirituality program is an enlivening program which has proven to stimulate minds, awaken hearts and touch spirits during the past year. As an "interspiritual program," it considers specific topics from the perspective of the wisdom found in diverse faith traditions. It seeks to illuminate the commonalities and differences among religious experiences. The goal of Pathways is not to blend traditions together but rather to allow participants to deepen and amplify their own spiritual paths in their search for the Divine. For this reason, the core of the program is a combination of personal experience, group interaction and multi-media instruction.

The Pathways program for the Fall, "Called to Community," will examine the relationship and

dynamics between the individual and a faith community. Topics such as "*Exploring Community*," "*Blessings and Challenges of a Spiritual Community*," "*Mind, Body, and Spirit in Community*," and "*Suffering, Death and Grief in Community*," will be explored and reflected upon. Also included will be a one day retreat titled, "*Ritual and Community*," and a closing project titled "*Your Ideal Spiritual Community*."

Applications are now being accepted for the Fall program. Anyone interested may contact Rose Petronella, Pathways Coordinator, at 860-346-6987, [sacredcircles01@att.net](mailto:sacredcircles01@att.net) or through the Spiritual Life Center at 860-243-2374 for more information.



2009 Pathways of Spirituality Staff & Participants

# Pilgrimage to Iona, Scotland      May 7<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup>, 2010

## A Week for Worship and Reflection

Leaders: Cathy Murtha, DW Director of the Spiritual Life Center and  
Rev. Susan Izard, Minister of Spiritual Life First Church of Christ Congregational  
\$2599\* from New York

The sacred Isle of Iona, Scotland is known for its rich heritage of Christian Celtic Spirituality and its natural beauty. Iona is currently the home of the Iona Community, a dispersed Christian ecumenical community that focuses on peace and social justice, rebuilding of community and the renewal of worship. We travel to Iona to worship in historic Iona Abbey and experience the weekly worship cycle of the Iona Community. Our days will be free to explore the Isle, enjoy the sights,



read, reflect, pray and be still. We will stay at the St. Columba Inn, just down the road from the Abbey and known for its delicious meals and Scottish hospitality. We will participate in the Iona Community pilgrimage around the Isle as well as informal group discussions led by Rev. Susan Izard and Cathy Murtha, DW. If interested, please contact Susan Izard by email at [rev.susan.izard@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:rev.susan.izard@whfirstchurch.org) or by phone at (860) 233-9605, extension 103.

## Book Review: Dating Jesus by Susan Campbell

The age of innocence is fraught with blindly following the “rules” of the game. So it goes with Susan Campbell as she “dates” Jesus three times a week in her fundamentalist church. It is so important to her and she takes it so very seriously that it isn’t until the day she decides to be baptized by immersion and the gown she wore was not fully immersed that she begins to question some of the doctrines of her church. Did the baptism really “take” if all she wore was not completely wet? How was Jesus going to view her?

Time passes and chosen to be homecoming Queen and not being allowed to dance causes teeth gritting

obedience. Many conflicting restrictions in this tumultuous soil sprout research, and the still conviction that Jesus does care. “In Jesus’ eyes, people weren’t Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. They just were, and he loved them,” quotes Susan Campbell.

It is clear the despite the many conflicts, her faith is extremely important to her. She moves from fundamentalism to feminist and states clearly, “I still love Jesus.” Join with Susan on this very honest journey of faith that will have you applauding, weeping, and very moved by her expression of faith.

*written by Pat Joy*

## Guided Meditation Retreat - Pilot Program

The Spiritual Life Center would like to offer a pilot program in the fall called “Guided Meditation Retreat”. This would be a Christian/Hebrew scripture based program where individuals would sign up to meet with a “Prayer Guide” or Spiritual Director daily for about 30-40 minutes for one week and be assigned daily meditations. We are currently thinking about running this program either the first week in November or the first week in December. We are looking to offer this program at a Church for its parishioners and later here at the Spiritual Life Center.

Now we are looking for people who would be interested in this program in various ways:

1. Would your church be interested in hosting a program like this?
2. Would you be interested being involved as a “Prayer Guide”/Spiritual Director at a church and/or at the Center?
3. Would you be interested in being a Supervisor of the Prayer Guides for the program?

If you are interested in any of the above or for further information please contact Sarah Annis, Events and Programs Cultivation Leader at [programs@spiritlifectr.org](mailto:programs@spiritlifectr.org). The prayer guide and supervisor would be paid an honorarium and are not volunteer positions.

# Save These Dates for Upcoming Fall Programs!

## Book Discussion: The Shack

*by William P. Young*

Presenter: Chickie Amberg

Thursday, September 17, 2009  
5:30 P.M. - 7:30 P.M.

Location: Spiritual Life Center  
Bloomfield, CT

Suggested Donation: Free will offering  
*Feel free to bring a brown bag dinner  
Light refreshments will be provided*

## Global Climate Change

Presenter: Rev. Thomas Carr

Thursday, September 24, 2009  
7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.

Location: First Church of Christ, Congregational  
West Hartford, CT

Suggested Donation: \$10  
*Donations will benefit the Spirit Life Center and  
the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network*

## Crossing Borders

Prayer Traditions and Rituals in Abrahamic Traditions

Presenter: Debbie Pallatto Fontaine

Saturday, October 3, 2009  
9:30 A.M. - 3:30 P.M.

Location: Spiritual Life Center  
Bloomfield, CT

Suggested Donation: \$50  
*Lunch will be provided*

## The Spirit of Organizing

Presenter: Susan Lovallo, CPA, CPO

Saturday, October 10, 2009  
9:30 A.M. - 3:30 P.M.

Location: First Church of Christ, Congregational  
West Hartford, CT

Suggested Donation: \$50  
*Lunch will be provided*

## Connecting with Universal Energy

Presenter: David Oat

Saturday, October 17, 2009  
9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Location: Spiritual Life Center  
Bloomfield, CT

Suggested Donation: \$50  
*Lunch will be provided*

## Celtic Spirituality

Celtic Crosses - their art and their meaning.

Presenter: Cathy Murtha, DW

Saturday, November 14, 2009  
9:30 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.

Location: Flagg Road, UCC  
West Hartford, CT

Suggested Donation: \$20



Spiritual Life Center, Inc.  
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This Newsletter edition  
was created for  
digital use, no hard  
copies were mailed.

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**Don't Forget to Check Out...**

**Sacred Circles - Mandala Art**

*by Rose Amodéo Petronella*

**on exhibit at the JP Webster Gallery  
at First Church of Christ Congregational  
West Hartford, CT**

**September and October, 2009**

*Notecards and Original Art available for purchase*

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