



The Source

Winter 2010

Newsletter of the Spiritual Life Center

Volume 21 - Number One

Found Blessings

As the Spiritual Life Center’s Board President, I must tell you that I am concerned about the state of not-for-profit agencies in the current CT economic climate. My educated guess is that you are as well. The Spiritual Life Center, from what we Board members know at present from our financial reports, is “holding its own.” Thank you for the support you have given us thus far.

In the words of John O’Donohue, you are one of our “found blessings.” I mentioned his book, To Bless the Space Between Us, in our last newsletter. I keep finding new gems in it. He writes: “Most of the time, we are unaware of how blessed our lives are.” “Found blessings” for him include friendship, good health, discoveries, and modest accomplishments. I have some additions: first, to repeat, our “found blessings” include you who support the work we do at the Spiritual Life Center; then there are our staff members who spend many evenings and Saturdays leading programs and providing spiritual guidance, creating new program ideas and handling administrative tasks; and our associate spiritual directors who gift us with supervisory skills by working with current directors and providing guidance for those who seek and find a spiritual director among the many we have trained here; and then there are our Board members who faithfully guide and attempt to ensure the future of the Center. We are so grateful for all of you.

John O’Donohue writes, “The found blessings also include the gifts that we find coming alive in our lives, abilities that sleep in our hearts that we never

suspected.” I have absolutely no doubt that if we pay attention and recognize our “found blessings,” we will realize more and more how much the Spiritual Life Center has helped us come alive and rekindle or find abilities that were asleep in our hearts. Certainly, this caring and compassionate community has done and continues to do that for me. In this season of hope and rebirth, I pray that the Spiritual Life Center community has been and is a “found blessing” for you. Peace to you as we move actively and with renewed spirits into 2010.

-Joanne White, President, Board of Directors



In This Issue...

Cathy’s Corner.....	p.2
Apply to Join the 2010-2012 Internship.....	p.3
Spring In-Service News.....	p.3
In The Stillness of My Own Mind.....	p.4

Pathways of Spirituality.....	p.5
Internship Class of 2010.....	p.5
Book Review: An Altar in the World.....	p.6
Before Creation.....	p.6
Save These Dates	p.7

Leadership Team

Cathleen Murtha, DW
Pastoral Discernment Leader

Diane Reynolds
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 Pallato-Fontaine

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.

Cathy's Corner...

Dear Friends and Pilgrims,

By the time you receive this electronic issue of The Source, the new year will have arrived and with it the beginning of a new decade. Like many of us, I wonder how could we be here already. Didn't we just turn the corner of a new century? And now a new decade!

Within the past few weeks several items have come my way that I find quite timely. The first is an article from the Dec. 16th issue of the Hartford Courant. The Living Section printed an article on our purpose in life and noted that those with purpose seemed happier. The article outlines four spiritual practices or exercises to help one discover deeper meaning and purpose. The four will be quite familiar to most of you: reflection, meditation, journaling and prayer. My hunch is that these four are the backbone of your spiritual lives. Over the years you have learned to develop these in ways that are unique to you and your journey.

The second item is the Charter for Compassion, initiated by the author and historian of religion, Karen Armstrong. Its premise is that the principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion compels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of all our fellow creatures, and to honor the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everyone, without exception with absolute justice, equity and respect. (<http://charterforcompassion.org>)

Together the spiritual practices and the Charter for Compassion lead us to be engaged pilgrims on this earth, praying and working for transformation. As we enter into this year in a new decade, let us join our prayer and practice with people from many faiths and nations who pray and work for peace. The following prayer is adapted from the Peace Pole Project (www.instituteforworldpeace.com)

Dear God, praised are You who created the universe.

Please, Dear God, I humbly ask You to shine Your love on me, my family and all people. May your love bring perfect holiness, perfect health and peace - peace in my heart and soul, peace in my family, peace in my nation, and peace in the entire world.

Please grant me wisdom in order to best serve you here on earth.

Praise you, Dear God, for loving all creation and bringing peace, love and holiness to all of life.

May peace prevail on Earth. Amen.

Blessings,

Cathleen Murtha, DW
Pastoral Discernment Leader

Applications for the 2010-2012 Internship in Spiritual Direction

Brochures and applications for the September 2010-May 2012 Internship in Spiritual Direction are now available on the Center's website www.spiritlifectr.org or by calling the office at 860-243-2374. Applications are due to the Center by April 1, 2010, and interviews will follow in late spring and early summer.

Please feel welcome to pass this information along to those who might be interested! Questions regarding the Internship can be directed to Andree Grafstein at the Center.



Sensitivities and Skills for Interfaith Leadership

Our Spring In-Service: Save the Date

March 24, 2010

9:00 am – 3:00pm

***At St Patrick – St Anthony
Urban Center, Hartford***

Presenters: Yehezkel Landau and
Karen Nell Smith

Yehezkel and Karen will offer an exploration of the dynamics and skills of interfaith leadership, including an overview of the process of conflict transformation, essential skills and attitudes for facilitation, the dynamics of diversity, and the integration of shared spiritual reflection and prayer. Participants will have the opportunity to experience a variety of approaches in this interactive workshop including exercises for spiritual devotion, small group dialogue, and team facilitation.

Yehezkel Landau

After earning an A.B. from Harvard University (1971) and an M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School (1976), Landau made aliyah (immigrated) to Israel in 1978. His work has been in the fields of interfaith education and Jewish-Arab peacemaking. He directed the OZ veSHALOM-NETIVOT SHALOM religious peace movement in Israel during the 1980's. From 1991 to 2003, he was co-founder and co-director of the OPEN HOUSE Center for Jewish-Arab Coexistence in Ramle, Israel. (www.friendsofopenhouse.org) He lectures internationally on Jewish-Christian-Muslim

relations and Middle East peace issues, has authored numerous journal articles, co-edited the book *Voices from Jerusalem: Jews and Christians Reflect on the Holy Land* (Paulist Press, 1992), and authored a research report entitled "Healing the Holy Land: Interreligious Peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine" (U.S. Institute of Peace, September 2003). Yehezkel is a professor and the director and lead faculty for the Building Abrahamic Partnerships program at Hartford Seminary. In 2009, he won the Spiritual Life Center's Living Spirit Award.

Karen Nell Smith

Corporate consultant since 1981, Smith has focused her work in arenas such as law, real estate and finance. In 1993, she co-created *From Conflict to Community* and in 2000, *Walking in the Way*, a program of Christian peace-building, to bring her skills to congregations, and has since served many faith-based organizations representing a number of denominations and traditions throughout New England. Smith received a B.A. from Mary Washington College and an MDiv. from Andover Newton Theological School, where she is on their adjunct faculty. Smith holds a certificate in mediation from the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, and is on the Building Abrahamic Partnerships facilitation team at Hartford Seminary. Ordained in the UCC, she is presently serving as pastor of the Congregational Church of Christ in North Leominster, MA, and as Program Director of The Brookfield Institute, a center for healing and peace-building she helped to establish in 2005.

In the Stillness of My Own Mind

In the stillness of my own mind,
I sense the dull tone of the inevitable.
I search for the enrichment of the past

To enlighten the future,
With no hope that anything
Can be done without the love
of God central to my being.
I feel the need to listen with
An open heart, and spiritual ears
So that God's desire for each person
I meet will be manifest in our
Time together.

I am not certain of the patience yet,
But feeling and sensing the
History in each pair of eyes lets
Me attempt to see behind the heart
Of each person.

In the darkness of the choices,
The most frightening calls to me
Reaching to me to examine that
Which I cannot explain,
That which I cannot spend time with
Without wondering why such a
Dark place is finally so redeeming.
Gratitude overflows and newness
Springs into being.

I feel a new person being designed
Even from the ream of the old materials
I once called me.

"In God we trust" feels like
the most necessary statement
one can make,
Yet until one reaches for that door to
Open it, God will simply wait in the
Silence of our fears.
To God be the Glory.

Jana Piváček-Cole
Oct. 22, 2008



Pathways of Spirituality

Unit III of the Pathways of Spirituality program ended December 14 and was titled "Called to Community." The questions we considered included:

How do I define "community"?

How has my experience of my family community influenced my relationship with the Divine?

How has society impacted the spiritual community I am, or was, a part of?

How have I experienced the Divine in a spiritual community?

Eleven participants shared their experiences, heard presentations based on a variety of inter-spiritual perspectives, and discussed their thoughts and feelings on the various topics. Discussions were generally heart-felt and lively!

At an all day retreat in early November titled "Community and Ritual," we shared our gratitude for a particular spiritual community which had made a significant difference in our lives, did an outdoor walking meditation, joined in a chanting ritual to the music of Krishna Das, and blessed each other with music and gesture in a closing ritual. Stories were shared, community bonding was palpable, and we were grateful for the Divine Presence among us.

The culmination of the Unit was a project which invited each participant to identify and make a presentation to the others on the qualities of his or her "Ideal Spiritual Community." We were intrigued by the commonalities as well as the differences among them!

In November, a staffing change took place in the Pathways leadership team. Ushakumari Williams, a much appreciated Team Member since Spring 2008, relocated to California after she retired from her full-time position with the State of Connecticut. Her particular wisdom and gifts will be missed by all.

We are grateful that a new Team Member, Carolyn Cushing, was found among the participants in the Spiritual Direction Internship! Carolyn brings a diverse background and a wealth of experience to Pathways, and we are delighted that she has joined us.

We are now accepting applications for Unit IV, "Sent in Service," which begins January 11, 2010. If you or someone you know is interested in participating, you may go to the Pathways page of the Spiritual Life Center website at www.spiritlifectr.org and download the application materials. More information is available from Rose Petronella, Pathways Coordinator, at 860-346-6987, sacredcircles01@att.net or by calling the Spiritual Life Center at 860-243-2374.



Internship Class of 2010

Year II

As this issue of the Newsletter arrives in your e-mail box the Internship class of 2010 will be about to begin their fourth and last semester. It is amazing how quickly time passes in this community's gathering! In this last semester we will welcome a number of guest presenters who will focus on a variety of areas of interest for practicing spiritual directors. For the first time we will be hosting two of these classes off-site where a larger group can gather. We are inviting all spiritual directors to these two classes. One class will focus on Communal Spiritual Discernment and will be presented by Bishop Gordon and Rebecca Scruton on January 20, 2010, from 6:30-9:30pm. The other will focus on Transference and Counter-transference and will be presented by Rev. Dr. Robert Henderson on February 24th, 2010 from 6:30-9:30pm. Both classes are being held at Holy Family Retreat Center in West Hartford. All spiritual directors are invited to register by calling the office. The cost of each session is \$25.00.

Book Review: *An Altar In The World: A Geography of Faith* by Barbara Brown Taylor

"Seek not to follow in the footsteps of men of old; rather, seek what they sought." Gautama Buddha

After many years of preaching and teaching, writing sermons, articles and books for mostly other clergy and would-be-preachers, Barbara Brown Taylor has written what she calls a field guide to spiritual practices. It seems her goal is to reach people beyond and within the church, people who may have abandoned the rituals of religious life, but not the need or the desire for them. What Taylor describes are formal and informal ways to enrich daily life and bring meaning to relationships with others and with God.

An Altar in the World could also be called a bridge, a bridge between people and their own beliefs and spiritual practices, as well as a bridge between peoples of different faiths. In a culture where the "religious" and the "I'm spiritual but not religious" seem to be growing farther and farther apart, Dr. Taylor has spanned the gulf by suggesting that the world offers altars everywhere. Readers may find that these are places where both the spiritual and the religious might find mutual interest and devotion.

True, some of what she presents will be familiar to practicing Christians and others. Meditation, pilgrimage, fasting, and prayer are centuries old approaches to God. Indeed certain readers will hear echoes of Brother Lawrence's *Practice of the Presence of God* or Jean deCaussade's *Sacrament of the Present Moment*.

Most, however, need only to scan these chapter titles to see that this might be the bridge they've been looking for, and that Taylor presents a somewhat fresh approach to ancient spiritual disciplines.

The Practice of Waking Up to God
The Practice of Paying Attention
The Practice of Wearing Skin
The Practice of Walking on the Earth
The Practice of Getting Lost
The Practice of Encountering Others
The Practice of Living with Purpose
The Practice of Saying No
The Practice of Carrying Water
The Practice of Feeling Pain
The Practice of Being Present to God
The Practice of Pronouncing Blessings

Taylor introduces her practices saying that "The chapters do not build on one another in any methodical way" so that the readers are free to begin and end where they choose. That may be however, the titles do seem to flow in meaning from start to finish. As a bridge is to be traversed from one end to another, so *An Altar in the World* might be experienced best from the first chapter to the last...if only for the sake of discovering oneself more fully blessed at the end.

Written by Sara Jane Munshower



Before Creation

~Carolyn A. Cushing

In the moment
before the moment
when world unfurled
in spiky stars, orbs of rock,
blue-black, swirling seas,
we were unto ourselves.

No one stood outside
to ask for mercy -
or receive it.

So we picked up pencils
traced thin lines of love
onto our hidden center
and waited for time
to open its topaz box.

Don't forget to put these wonderful events on the calendar!

Our Annual Living Spirit Awards Dinner

Monday, April 26, 2010

**Pond House Café and Hall
1555 Asylum Ave
West Hartford, CT**

\$50 per person

Come celebrate the Living Spirit Awards with us. Eat delicious food, have fun bidding in our auction, listen to *Smooth Sounds*, our live jazz band and have a great night in community at the beautiful restaurant of Elizabeth Park!



1990 – 2010



**Come Celebrate Twenty Years
of the Internship!**

**Sunday, June 6, 2010
In the afternoon**

**First Congregational Church
10 Wintonbury Ave.
Bloomfield, CT 06002**

Stay tuned for more details!