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The Spirituality Network,
Inc. provides:

- Education and formation through the Wellstreams Training Program
- Spiritual direction referrals for groups and individuals
- Retreat planning and facilitation
- Programs to foster the spiritual life
- Connection to a variety of spirituality resources in central Ohio

As an ecumenical organization, the Spirituality Network serves people both within and outside of religious institutions.

SPIRITUALITY NETWORK
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spirituality.network

WRITTEN ON CHRISTMAS EVE, 1513

I salute you. I am your friend, and my love for you goes deep.
There is nothing I can give you which you have not. But there is much,
very much, that, while I cannot give it, you can take. No heaven can
come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today. Take heaven!
No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present little instant.
Take peace! The gloom of the world is but a shadow. Behind it, yet within
our reach, is joy. There is radiance and glory in darkness, could we but see.
And to see, we have only to look. I beseech you to look!

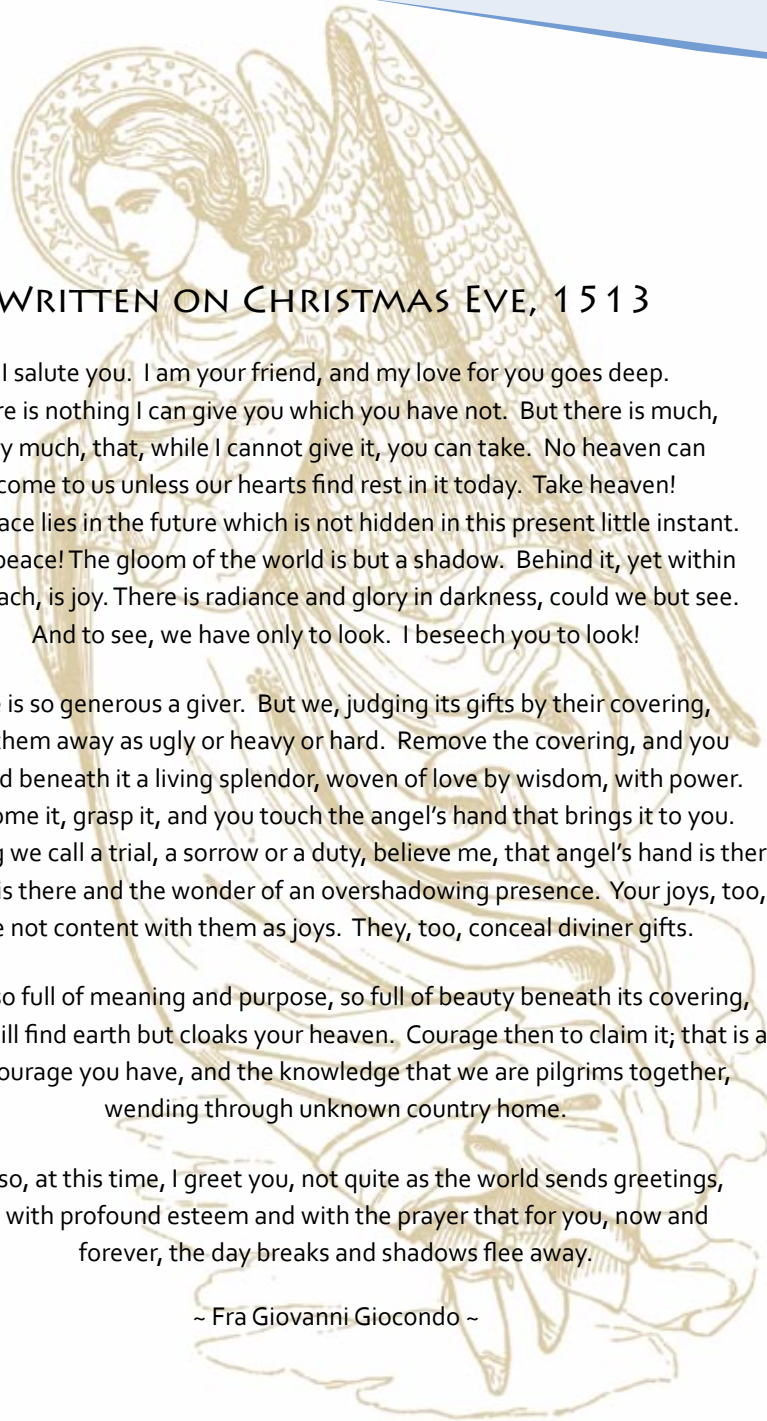
Life is so generous a giver. But we, judging its gifts by their covering,
cast them away as ugly or heavy or hard. Remove the covering, and you
will find beneath it a living splendor, woven of love by wisdom, with power.
Welcome it, grasp it, and you touch the angel's hand that brings it to you.
Everything we call a trial, a sorrow or a duty, believe me, that angel's hand is there.
The gift is there and the wonder of an overshadowing presence. Your joys, too,
be not content with them as joys. They, too, conceal diviner gifts.

Life is so full of meaning and purpose, so full of beauty beneath its covering,
that you will find earth but cloaks your heaven. Courage then to claim it; that is all!
But courage you have, and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together,
wending through unknown country home.

And so, at this time, I greet you, not quite as the world sends greetings,
but with profound esteem and with the prayer that for you, now and
forever, the day breaks and shadows flee away.

~ Fra Giovanni Giocondo ~

WE OFFER OUR PRAYERS
FOR PEACE ON EARTH, GOODWILL TOWARD ALL.
CAROL ANN, AMANDA, AND PATRICIA



SPIRITUALITY NETWORK EVENTS

PREREGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. SPACE IS LIMITED. To register, send name, phone, e-mail, and name of program to Spirituality Network, ATTN: PROGRAMS, 444 E Broad St, Columbus, OH 43215; call 614/228-8867; or e-mail spiritnetwk@hotmail.com; online at <http://www.spiritualitynetwork.org/events.html>. Registration fee may be paid by cash, check, or credit card (MasterCard, Visa, Discover).

CURIOSITY, COURAGE, AND COMPASSION

13TH ANNUAL ARTI GRAS! CELEBRATION OF ART AND SPIRIT

Saturday, February 8, 2013, 9am-3:30pm
Trinity Lutheran Seminary, 2199 E Main Street, Bexley

REGISTRATION DETAILS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE IN DECEMBER.

PREREGISTRATION IS STRONGLY ENCOURAGED.

"Creativity takes courage." ~ Henri Matisse

It takes courage to follow one's curiosity into creativity and if you do, you are likely to discover greater compassion for yourself, for others and the world.

Engaging in any creative activity enriches life, and yet most people are intimidated by the very words "art" and "creativity." Arti Gras! provides a safe, judgment-free space to explore creativity and spirituality. We focus on the creative process rather than on the finished product.

This event offers a wide range of possibilities for exploring the creative elements of the life journey, featuring a menu of mini-workshops that include:

- Art journaling
- Gentle dance/movement
- Written word and poetry
- Simple sculpting
- Paint, mixed media, and collage

This is a grassroots, hands-on experience open to all.

Children under the age of 16 are welcome if accompanied by an adult.



Follow your curiosity to explore a variety of artistic and creative avenues.

Discover your inner courage to engage in creativity.

Open to greater compassion for yourself, others, and for the world.

SPIRITUALITY NETWORK EVENTS

PREREGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. SPACE IS LIMITED. To register, send name, phone, e-mail, and name of program to Spirituality Network, ATTN: PROGRAMS, 444 E Broad St, Columbus, OH 43215; call 614/228-8867; or e-mail spiritnetwk@hotmail.com; online at <http://www.spiritualitynetwork.org/events.html>. Registration fee may be paid by cash, check, or credit card (MasterCard, Visa, Discover).

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE: A CONTEMPLATIVE DAY IN LENT

Saturday, February 23, 2013, 9:30am-3:30pm
Spirituality Network, 444 E Broad St
Facilitated by Amanda Stone Cushing

Registration fee: \$50 PREPAID by February 10; \$70 after.
Lunch and all materials included. Scholarships available.

This quiet day of reflection will include a brief session introducing Lectio Divina or sacred reading process, group process and discussion, and an extended period of individual silent reflection.

Amanda Stone Cushing is the program coordinator for the Spirituality Network, faculty member of Wellstreams, retreat leader, and spiritual director.

SACRED FEMININE

Second Tuesdays, 1pm-3pm

Join us on the second Tuesday of each month as we gather for discussion, reflection, and exploration on a variety of topics that help us to connect to uniquely feminine aspects of the Divine. Our intention is to discover more balance, create more peace, and offer more hope to our world.

Raising our voices: women who inspire us to express ourselves with courage and authenticity. Each month will include discussion, reflection, and creativity as we share our sources of inspiration for lifting our voices in truth and love.

In order for us to plan accordingly, PLEASE RSVP: 614/228-8867 or spiritnetwk@hotmail.com.

Suggested donation: \$10

Winter-Spring dates:

February 12

March 12

April 9

May 14



CREATIVITY AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: AN ONLINE CREATIVITY SERIES

April 29, 2013 – June 24, 2013
Facilitated by Judy Smoot. Space is limited to 10 participants.

Using the book *The Creative Call* by Janice Elsheimer, participants will join together in a supportive community to explore their own avenues of creativity as a spiritual practice. The author describes her book as “a biblically based book designed to teach the reader how to reawaken the artist within and how to use art as a pathway to a closer walk with God.” In addition to engaging in the material personally, participants will share and deepen their exploration by participating in discussion with one another on a password-protected website set up specifically for this series. In addition, participants are encouraged to attend a closing retreat in the Hocking Hills area on Monday, June 24, 9:30am-1:30pm with the option of remaining in the area longer for one’s own reflection and creativity time.

Virtual community offers flexibility of time, location, and participation

- Access content via computer, anywhere you have Internet access
- Engage whenever it is convenient for you, 24/7
- All material will remain active throughout the series

Facilitator Judy Smoot is growing into her own creative call, and enjoys providing a welcoming and safe space for those desiring to deepen their creativity as a spiritual practice. A graduate of Wellstreams, Judy is a spiritual director, retreat leader, and founder of Always We Begin Again, a ministry for people living with chronic disease. She is a Benedictine Oblate with the Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in Erie, PA.

SAVE THE DATE! MORE DETAILS COMING SOON.

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REFLECTIONS FROM THE CHAIR *REFLECTIONS*

It's hard to believe that the close of 2012 is already upon us! I imagine many of us have had a number of significant events happen over the course of the year. For me, the most significant was the loss of my mother as a complication of her Alzheimer's disease. Although her passing was painful in many respects, it was also a blessing in many others. She was a wonderful woman who showered those who met her with amazing gifts.

So as we move into this holiday season, a time we traditionally think of as when we share gifts with others, let this first be a time of reflection; a gift you give to yourself. Before we get too wrapped up in wrapping presents and other holiday festivities, I invite you to join me in letting the Advent candles we light be our reminders to grant ourselves these gifts. I know my mother will be with me as I go through this process. I pray you will find an equally comforting companion.

PEACE. For the month of December, take 5-15 minutes first thing each morning for quiet meditation. I promise it will have a positive effect on your mind during the entire day. Use these thoughts to guide your meditations: "I am a peaceful soul. My aim today is to have a peaceful mind and radiate peace to every person I come into contact with." Try to experience the stillness of mind of being a peaceful soul. As other thoughts emerge, do not judge or focus on them but repeat to yourself, "I am a peaceful soul. I am a peaceful soul." This season, be blessed with peace.

JOY. A friend of mine and I have an ongoing debate between striving for happiness or joy. What's the difference? According to the Internet, happiness comes from the Hebrew word *ashar*, which means "to set right or be blessed." Joy comes from the Greek word *chara*, which means "to be exceedingly glad." Happiness tends to be momentary and replaceable, whereas joy, although perhaps not as dramatic, is more constant and internal. Don't misunderstand me, happiness is great. But with joy, there's a deep sense that "this, too, shall pass," even when the circumstances are less than what we would want. This season, be blessed with joy.

LOVE. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, he responded "to love your God with your whole heart and soul." And the second greatest was "to love your neighbor as yourself." I have to admit, the last part is the hardest for me. Maybe for you, too. I find I can be pretty hard on myself. I tend to see my weaknesses and not the fullness in which God sees me. This month, when you look into the mirror, be aware of the flaws, but look past them. Focus on the child of God that you are... and know that you are loved... not as you might be or could be, but as you are. This season, be blessed with love.

HOPE. The holidays can often be a challenging time for many. You may be someone having difficulty finding hope at this time due to some personal current or past circumstances. Often, letting go of long-standing beliefs and identifications removes us from our "comfort zone." However, all change involves letting go. If we truly seek growth and healing, we must allow ourselves to be reshaped from within. When you find yourself holding on to something that's blocking you from that growth... be aware, then open your hand and heart. This season, be blessed with hope.

I wish you these blessings this Advent season and throughout 2013. God willing, our paths will cross soon at some Network function.

Do Justice ~ Love Mercy ~ Walk Humbly

Alex Rodriguez

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Patricia J. Gibboney, CFRE

As we celebrate this gentle season of loving, sharing, and giving, it seems appropriate that we express our deepest gratitude to everyone connected to the Spirituality Network. During the past year we have been blessed with the generosity of so many, through their gifts of time, talent, and resources. Because of this generosity we have been able to continue our mission of offering spiritual direction, retreats, training, outreach, programs, and event ministries. Through the Network, individuals continue to find wise mentors, spiritual directors, and fellow pilgrims who accompany them on their spiritual journey.

As we approach a new year of exciting program offerings, we are pleased to share with you an amazing opportunity that has been gifted to the Spirituality Network by the Metropolitan Area Church Council (MACC). After 21 years of sponsoring the Living Faith Awards breakfast event, MACC is turning ownership over to the Spirituality Network, with all proceeds benefitting our programs. We are honored and thrilled to be awarded this special gift. This event will continue to be a celebration and recognition of individuals for their outstanding service within their religious/interfaith community and will also include the Alvin Hadley Social Justice Award.

The nomination form for the 2013 awards will be available on our website, www.spiritualitynetwork.org, as will be more details about the event. Please consider nominating an individual who will meet the criteria that will be outlined. This event is a wonderful opportunity for the Spirituality Network to showcase our mission and to partner with the diverse religious organizations in our community.

Your continued support of the Network is an affirmation of our mission and shared values. We encourage your input and participation, and thank you for being such an important part of our success during 2012. May you be blessed in many ways during this holiday season.

Giving is a blessing for both the giver and the receiver.

2013 LIVING FAITH AWARDS

THURSDAY, MAY 16, 8AM

HARRY C. MOORES CENTER
CAPITAL UNIVERSITY

SPIRITUALITY NETWORK ACCEPTS LEADERSHIP OF THE LIVING FAITH AWARDS

As Pat Gibboney describes in the Executive Director's column, the Spirituality Network is now managing the Living Faith Awards, which recognize persons of exemplary faith and the influence of faith within their vocation and larger community. This responsibility provides the Network with an opportunity to reach out to a broader range of faith communities and congregations.

There are many ways in which you can participate:

- Serve on the planning/selection committee
- Submit nominations
- Purchase ads for the program book
- Attend the breakfast

The call for nominations and information about purchasing ads or tickets will be available at a later date. If you are interested in serving on the committee, contact Pat Gibboney, 614/228-8867, spiritnetwk@hotmail.com.



WELLSTREAMS: AN ECUMENICAL TRAINING PROGRAM IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

www.wellstreamscolumbus.org

WELLSTREAMS WORKSHOPS

These workshops are open to anyone who desires to grow and are ideal for persons in helping professions, lay ministers, caregivers, etc. Please preregister by calling 614/228-8867; via e-mail: carol.spencer1@juno.com; or online: <http://wellstreamscolumbus.org/calendar.html>. Location: Martin de Porres Center, 2330 Airport Dr.

MANDALA MAKING

Thursday, February 14, 2013, 7-9:15pm, \$20

"There is nothing as wise as a circle" (Rilke). There are as many methods as there are makers and there are no right or wrong ways to do a mandala. There will be a brief presentation and overview of the spiritual practice of mandala making and its use as an aid for prayer and meditation. For most of the session one will experience the practice using watercolors, chalk, gel pens, and collage materials. All materials will be supplied. No experience or special talent is needed. The focus is on the PROCESS, NOT THE END PRODUCT; however, most people seem delighted with what they create.

Facilitator: Bobbi Gill is a spiritual director, artist, poet, and horticulturalist. She is also a graduate of Wellstreams (1998).

PRACTICE OF GROUP SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Wednesdays, February 20 & 27, 2013, 7-9:30pm, \$35

Group spiritual direction is a process in which people gather together on a regular basis to assist one another in an ongoing awareness of God in all of life. The process best happens in a group of four or five people, all of whom are seeking spiritual direction and are willing to enter into a process where spiritual direction can happen for themselves and the others in the group.

Facilitator: Carol Ann Spencer, OP, a Dominican Sister of Peace, is a spiritual director and retreat facilitator who coordinates the Wellstreams Training Program. She trained in Spirituality and Spiritual Direction at the Institute for Spiritual Leadership in Chicago.

AN INTRODUCTION TO REIKI

Wednesdays, March 6 & 13, 7-9:15pm, \$35

Men and women from diverse denominations and backgrounds are reclaiming healing practices as essential to their spiritual formation. Reiki is the life force that moves through all living things. The practice of Reiki, which has Eastern origins, is a learned technique that promotes mind, body, and spirit healing. It is highly effective as an agent for stress reduction and relaxation. It is administered by "laying on of hands." In the Western practice of Reiki the hand positions correspond with the seven major energy centers (chakras) on the body. There will be information on the history of Reiki and its ideals, along with a basic overview of the Chakra system. There will also be time for some experiences of Reiki and its hand positions.

Facilitator: Donita Harris is a spiritual director and Reiki Master. She was introduced to Reiki in 1996 and became a Reiki II practitioner in 1998, completing her master level training in 2000. Donita is a 2004 graduate of Wellstreams and a member of the Pastoral Staff of the United Methodist Church for All People in Columbus. She is in charge of Congregational Development and Spiritual Formation.

CARING FOR THE INNER CHILD

Wednesdays, March 20-27, 7-9:15pm, \$35

This two-part series will explore the concept of Inner Child work and the ways in which it offers a wealth of tools and images that open us to an infinitely healthier perspective on life and the spiritual journey. The material will be presented using a combination of prayer, presentation, experiential dialogue, and ritual. In the first week we will look at the ways in which our God-given feelings, if honored, serve to bring us to wholeness. If they are long ago abandoned, dismissed or unfelt, they can lead to a divided self. In week two we will examine ways to develop a healthy attitude toward inner child work and a way to access the child that we were—and are—in God's eyes.

Facilitator: Maxine Shonk, OP, a Dominican Sister of Peace, is a spiritual director, retreat facilitator, preacher, and teacher. Her education and training are in theology, pastoral studies, and spirituality with specific training in the Inner Child at the Institute for Spiritual Leadership in Chicago.

GRIEF, LOSS, AND THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Saturday, April 6, 9am-1pm, \$40

This workshop covers the fundamentals of grief and bereavement—definitions of grief and mourning, phases of the grief process, faces of the grief response, and tasks of healing from grief. It also specifically addresses how to assist a grieving person and how to recognize the dynamics of grief as spiritual crisis and spiritual transformation.

Facilitator: Annie Dalby, LISW-S, is a spiritual director and the Director of Social Work and Bereavement Services for Zusman Hospice in Bexley. She is a graduate of Wellstreams (2009) who feels deeply called to this work and deeply humbled by the beauty and courage of those whom she serves.

DISCOVERING GOD THROUGH THE HORSE-HUMAN CONNECTION

Wednesday, April 10, 7-9:15pm and Saturday, April 20, 10am-12:30pm, \$35

Spiritual directors and those in the helping professions depend on their heart, mind, body, and spirit when they engage with those they companion. Dottie's understanding of these areas comes largely from her personal experience of interacting with horses. Her extensive apprenticeships in equine education and years of working with adults in equine assisted learning insure an experience geared for personal development and authentic relationships. This workshop has two parts. Part one takes place in a classroom setting to explore the implications of equine assisted learning for the spiritual director or companion. Part two will be held at Sugar Lump Farm, Dottie's equine facility in Johnstown. Both sessions are experiential in nature; no previous horse experience is needed, and there is no riding.

Facilitator: Dottie Kluesener obtained her Master of Arts in Education from Ohio State. She is also a graduate of the Wellstreams Training Program for spiritual direction and formation (1998). Dottie has over 15 years of experience of caring for and learning from horses. She is an Eponaquest Advanced Instructor through Epona Equestrian Services of Tucson, Arizona (www.taofequus.com) and a certified Equine Specialist through EAGALA, the national Equine Assisted Growth and Development Association (www.eagala.org).

ALWAYS WE BEGIN AGAIN

We are excited for the official launch of our website at www.myawba.org and the blog at www.myawba.blogspot.com. We invite you to visit our virtual homes if you have not found your way to either of these sites. There is quite a bit of activity and word is making its ways across the United States and "across the Pond" as my Irish friend calls it.

Our most recent online retreat began October 21 with 11 participants from California, Maine, Washington, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. If you or someone you know would benefit from the flexibility and focused attention of a virtual community, keep an eye on our website for the next Internet-based retreat experience, "Praying With Illness," to be offered beginning in late February.

AWBA will find itself at Sugar Lump Farm again this spring for a workshop. We are also working with an artist to facilitate a creativity-based fundraiser and workshop in March. Check into the website for information or, better yet, register on our website to receive monthly newsletters sent as soon as events are confirmed.

Our board is looking to add a few new members especially in the area of finance/general business and/or social media/marketing who have a passion for caregivers and those with chronic disease. If you know of anyone who might be a good fit, let me know. Our bylaws allow for new members to serve a 1-year term before deciding to serve for 3 years. We have one new board member who lives out of state so it is not critical that these individuals be local.

Thank you for your support and prayers as we continue to widen and deepen our area of ministry.

Judy Smoot
614/891-6044
director@myawba.org



THE WONDER OF IT ALL



What strikes awe in you? Where is the wonder in your life that brings you to stop and listen for a while? These are the questions that were asked at our Women to Women Retreat on October 26-27 at the beautiful Lake House at Dominican Acres in Blacklick through the generosity of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Twenty women gathered there, some overnight, some for the day, some from a history of homelessness, some from places of comfort, some from public housing, and some from suburbia. But all came with a hunger for connection and a need to be together and share their spirit and their story.

Maxine Shonk, OP, welcomed all on Friday evening, inviting them to receive and honor themselves without judgment wherever each happened to be in spirit, mind, or circumstance. On Saturday morning all gathered with Linda Bryant who, reflecting on her own imminent eye surgery, took the group through an interactive imagery. She asked each one to don her own blindfold and to listen to and reflect on "The Way Under the Way" an essay by Mark Nepo: "for all that has been written, for all that has been read, we are led to this instant where one of us will speak and one of us will listen, as if no one has ever placed an oar into that water." And speak and listen they did, hearing one another as if for the first time.

Bobbi Gill introduced the art of the mandala to the women and helped each to give expression to the wonder of the day, of being together, of hearing and speaking and seeing the mystery now through the eyes of the divine. The women spent time shaping into eternal circles the vision of their spirits, allowing that spirit to have its way with them. Then they themselves became the circle as they entered into a sacred sharing of the vision through each mandala.

As the day ended each woman took her leave, perhaps carrying a new vision for herself or a new insight to ponder or a new friendship to treasure. The day was well spent and as each woman departed for home the circle widened to include in it all she would meet along her way.

The Women to Women program tries to sponsor two overnight retreats each year for the women involved. The first is in the spring for the companions, those "listeners" who gather the women at each site in caring circles. The second is in the autumn for participants as well as companions. These retreats are made possible through grants and through donations from individuals. Contributions to these retreat efforts or to any of the activities of the Women to Women program are needed and welcomed. They can be made through the Spirituality Network.



BOOKS

AND MORE



BLESSINGS FOR CHRISTMAS

Give your gift recipients blessings for good times and bad with one or a set of the blessing books by Maxine Shonk, OP.

Blessing upon Blessing offers 150 blessings that readers are invited to take into their own hearts and then in turn to bestow on others.

Silver Linings: Blessings for Shadow Times focuses on those challenging times when we may need blessings the most.

\$12 each; 4 or more of any book, \$40

2-book set (1 of each), \$20

To order: www.spiritualitynetwork.org/publications.html or call 614/228-8867.

HELP THE NETWORK WITH YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

When you shop for books, music, gifts, or gift cards remember to use our Amazon.com link, which returns a portion of the price to the Network. Bookmark the Amazon Purchase Program link at www.spiritualitynetwork.org.

COMMUNITY EVENTS



C. G. JUNG ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL OHIO

Jung Haus, 59 W Third Ave; 614/291-8050, JungACO@JungCentralOhio.org, www.JungCentralOhio.org. Call or e-mail for information and/or to register for these programs.

2nd Saturday Coffee & Conversations, 10am-12pm most months. Informal discussions on topics which explore the concepts of Carl Jung and post-Jungians. Donations appreciated.

STS. PETER & PAUL RETREAT CENTER

2734 Seminary Rd, SE, Newark; 740/928-4246; info@stspeterandpaulretreatcenter.org; www.stspeterandpaulretreatcenter.org

Annual Couples Retreat, February 8-9, 2013, 7pm Friday-Saturday dinner. \$120/couple includes private room and Saturday meals.

Lenten Morning of Reflection, Saturday March 9, 2013, 9am-12pm, \$15. Presenter: Janice Bachman, OP.

ST. FRANCIS SPIRITUALITY CENTER

200 St. Francis Ave, Tiffin; 419/443-1485, peace@franciscanretreats.org, franciscanretreats.org/

Centering with Pottery and Prayer, March 1-2, 2013, Friday 7pm-Saturday, 8pm. Presenter: Sr. Jane Frances Omlor, OSF. Donation: \$150; commuter \$110. Experience profound prayer in your heart as you mold the clay in your hands. Participants will create with clay and get in touch with the earth at many different levels. You will make lovely pieces of pottery of your own to take home. Class limited to 10 participants.

MARTIN DE PORRES CENTER

2330 Airport Dr, Columbus; registration/information: 614/416-1910, martindepordes@opeace.org, www.martindepordescenter.net

The Art of Marie-Alain Couturier, February 16, 2013. Presenter: Mark Wedig, OP, Professor of Theology and Philosophy at Barry University speaks on Dominican artist Couturier's (1897-1954) project to incorporate modern art into the sacred aesthetic canon. Martin de Porres will exhibit Stations of the Cross painted by Couturier in February and March.

Saints at the Dinner Table, April 20, 11am-1:30pm. High Tea featuring Amy Heyd, author of the book, *Saints at the Dinner Table*. The menu will include a few tasty treats from the book. Copies of the book will be available for purchase and signing.

More specific information and Institute for Maturing Spirituality programs will be available at www.martindepordescenter.net by January 15.

COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION OF CENTRAL OHIO

2350 Indianola Ave, Columbus; 614/558-1141; jeff@nvcoho.org; www.nvcoho.org

Developing an Attitude of Gratitude: Strengthen and Deepen Your Relationships with Heartfelt Appreciation, December 7-8, 2012, Friday, 6-9 pm, Saturday, 9:30am-5:30pm. Indianola Presbyterian Church, 1970 Waldeck Ave.





REFLECTIONS OF A RETREATANT

by Mary Ellen George

SILENT DIRECTED
RETREAT
AUGUST 17-25, 2013
OUR LADY OF THE
PINES

Directed retreat for
participants is also a
practicum opportunity for
Wellstreams graduates.

Details forthcoming in 2013.

Is silence golden? Last August, I participated in a 6-day "silent" directed retreat, facilitated by the Wellstreams staff, on the beautiful grounds of Our Lady of the Pines Retreat Center in Fremont, Ohio. I wondered how I would survive and manage these days of silence. So, as I prepared for this retreat, I packed up my Nook, needlepoint, mandala coloring book, and reading books. I wanted to be sure I had plenty of ways to occupy my time, concerned that I'd become bored and agitated by days of silence.

At the opening ceremony, we were encouraged to reflect on and share our deepest desire for the retreat. My deepest desire was not only for clarity on the next chapter of my life, having retired from a 14-year career 1 week prior to this retreat, but also to be open to whatever God wanted to reveal to me. The silent retreat began after this short introduction, with even meals taken in silence, interrupted only by daily sessions with a spiritual director.

I retreated to my assigned room and began my days of silence and contemplation, taking occasional walks to extend the realm of my reflections to nature. My walks took on the shape of walking in circles, similar to walking a labyrinth, but without the twists and turns of a labyrinth. These brisk walks served to energize my soul and to refresh my spirit.

By day two, however, my predictions that the silence might become overwhelming became true and I wanted to return home. However, the Spirit and my spiritual director helped me to see that silence was exactly what I needed to slow down and to hear God's voice within. I needed to return home alright but to the home in my heart and to walk with God there. So, by day three I moved from being restless to becoming peaceful, embracing the silence as a gift. I spent longer periods of time just being with the Silence, understanding that the Spirit was with me, and enjoying the nourishment that the silence was offering me. As the days unfolded, I came to understand, unexpectedly, through my dreams, that God was speaking to me through vivid images that when presented to my spiritual director invited us into rich conversation of how God was present. I came to understand that I could be comfortable with my discomfort of not knowing the next chapter of my life but that God would be present with me, that my journey would not be travelled alone. Other understandings included how God invites me to take risks or leaps of faith so that I might grow in trust, courage, hope, and love.

At the closing ceremony, we blessed each other with selections from Maxine Shonk's book, *Blessing upon Blessing*. These blessings moved us by their awesome appropriateness, having been chosen randomly from a basket. Fittingly, these blessings marked the conclusion of our silence and filled our hearts.

I walk away from this retreat recognizing that silence is more than golden: it is a blessing and a gift both to behold and to be held by and within. May the God of Silence be with you and find you!

Mary Ellen George is the founder of the Spirituality Network's Wings and Prayers quilt ministry.

ONGOING GROUPS



CENTERING PRAYER

Led by Fr. Vinny McKiernan, CSP, at the Newman Center, 64 W Lane Ave, Columbus, Mondays 7-7:45pm and Tuesdays 12:15-1pm. 614/291-4674; e-mail: vinnycsp@yahoo.com.

TURNING LEAVES AND TEA LEAVES

Second Wednesdays, 2-3:15pm. Monthly book club facilitated by Marialein Anzenberger, OP, and Colleen Gallagher, OP. Martin de Porres Center, 2330 Airport Dr, Columbus; 614/416-1910; martindeporres@oppeace.org; www.martindeporrescenter.net.

BLUE HERON SANGHA

Tuesdays, 7:15-8:45pm. Martin de Porres Center, 2330 Airport Dr, Columbus. A mindfulness community in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. Contact Sandy at scoen@columbus.rr.com.

THOMAS MERTON STUDY GROUP

Third Mondays, 6-8pm. Vespers in Motherhouse chapel, 2320 Airport Dr, and discussion of Merton readings, led by Merton scholar David Belcastro, PhD. Hosted by Martin de Porres Center, 614/416-1910.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WRITING GUILD

A network for the personal and professional empowerment of women through writing. Meetings free and open to all, for writing, reading, and gentle critiquing in a safe, supportive environment. Contact Jeanne Marlowe at jamarlowe@juno.com, 614/476-8802.

January 5, February 2, 10am-12:30pm, Columbus Public Library, 96 S Grant Ave, 3rd fl. board room.

INTERFAITH ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL OHIO SPIRITUAL SHARING GROUP

Contact Jeanne Marlowe, 614/476-8802; jamarlowe@juno.com. IACO represents eight major faith traditions—Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islam, Jain, Jewish, and Sikh; www.iaco.org.

December 5, January 2, February 6, March 6, 12-1 pm, Columbus Metropolitan Library, 96 S Grant Ave, 3rd fl board room (February 6: conference room 2).



444 E Broad St
Columbus OH 43215
spiritnetwk@hotmail.com
spiritualitynetwork.org

The Spirituality Network is an ecumenical outreach addressing the “thirst for the God of Life.” Founded by Christians, the Network aspires to be a community of acceptance and inclusion. We seek to create hope, peace, and purpose in our community.

We Believe:

- That God’s love is unconditional
- That each person is drawn into relationship with God through the circumstances of human experience
- That a healthy, ongoing relationship with God, self, and all of creation moves one to respond authentically to the needs of others
- That a contemplative life stance must be rooted in prayer, nonviolence, and a radical passion for truth

We Provide:

- Education and formation through the Wellstreams Program
- Spiritual direction referrals for groups and individuals
- Retreat planning and facilitation
- Programs to foster the spiritual life, including continuing education and professional enrichment for those in caring ministries
- Outreach to the underserved in society, through programs, scholarships, and other enrichment opportunities

We Serve:

- Both those with and without formal faith affiliations
- Both those with and without ability to pay.

The Spirituality Network, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization.

To receive updates on Network and community events via e-mail, go to spiritualitynetwork.org and click on "SN Google Group Signup" in the middle of the page. Click on "Apply for group membership" on right side of the google group page. Click on red signup button and follow prompts using gmail or any e-mail address.

GOT CHAIRS?

We would appreciate donations of stackable chairs for meetings at the Network office. One by one our existing chairs are falling apart and we would rather not endanger our visitors! We need at least 12 chairs.

We always need used paper that is clean on one side for xeroxing and printing and stamps for mailings. Any donations would be appreciated.

Call the office at 614/228-8867 if you can help with these needs.

SUPPORT THE MISSION OF THE SPIRITUALITY NETWORK:

DONATE ONLINE NOW >

Or mail your tax-deductible gift to The Spirituality Network, 444 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

Thank you!