BEARINGS

for the Life of Faith

Autumn 2016

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Editors' Note

It's hard to have a conversation about religion these days without someone bringing up the word "spirituality." Many now claim the title, "spiritual but not religious," while others speak glowingly of their personal spiritual experiences. According to Pew Research, more and more people are discarding established religious membership and practices (sitting in a pew or under a prayer shawl in a synagogue) for something less traditional and more life-style specific—finding God in a forest or while doing yoga or watching the Perseids in the summer sky. Those who place themselves in this category say they prefer to experience the divine in the ordinary and the personal instead of attending a "house of worship" as a member of a community of believers formed by common habits of faith.

Diana Butler Bass, author of *Grounded: Finding God in the World, A Spiritual Revolution*, puts it this way, "What was once reserved for a few saints has now become the quest of millions around the planet—to be able to touch, feel, and know God for one's self." For Butler Bass, this translates into "divine nearness," and "a quotidian God, whose holiness is revealed in worldly things, and toward divine simplicity, whose connections are woven through all that is." Many indigenous religions have experienced the sacred in this way for centuries. In our current world, where we grow our own food, craft our own beer, make our own playlists, Butler Bass argues, "It makes perfect sense that we are making our spiritual lives as well, crafting a new theology. And that God is far more personal and close at hand." Such a path can sound appealing.

Or troubling for those who worry that this kind of quest for experience of the transcendent in the personal and the everyday focuses too much on the individual, and fails to face the challenges of faith. Critics of the warm glow that surrounds the contemporary quest for spirituality wonder if such a spirituality centered on the self isn't more akin to a couple of dry martinis at cocktail hour than anything that resembles discipleship. They argue that where faith gets enriching is precisely where it becomes challenging. When we bring our beliefs into a community, we enter into dialogue with others, who, though bound by a tradition, often think very differently than we do. Can that be frustrating? Of course, and yet those who prize this kind of religious engagement contend that this is when faith grows in complexity and depth.

Instead of asking who's right and who's wrong, this issue of *Bearings* offers a multitude of voices on how and where the transcendent breaks through—a scholar unpacks spirituality's "glow word" status, a pastor introduces children to the idea of vocation, a chaplain in a nursing home experiences a brief and powerful moment of unveiling, and a writer encounters a tree considered sacred by the Ojibwe. Welcome to the conversation.

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BEARINGS

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An Interview with Lucy Bregman

Photo by Ryan S. Brandenberg, © 2016 Temple University

Spirituality:
Unpacking a Glow Word

Lucy Bregman has spent much of her career writing about death and dying—that is, until her latest book, The Ecology of Spirituality. *She chose this subject because the word "spirituality" kept popping up as the cure for every medical issue she encountered. What's wrong with our healthcare system? A lack of spirituality. Suspicious of this answer, she decided to take on the often warm and fuzzy notion of spirituality, asserting that we need a better understanding of what spirituality is (and is not), and what it can (and more importantly, can't) do.*

Many of us think of spirituality as a positive thing. In fact, in your introduction you state that "the term glows so strongly that it is hard to say anything really bad about spirituality." You believe this "ought to make more of us wonder." Was that the motivation for writing your book?

I noticed that everyone, including myself, used this term "spirituality" with nothing more than a good warm feeling about it and only a murky sense of what it meant. The basic problem is that we use the word "spirituality" as if it is a *thing*, something that we can define, assess, make claims about, and place our hopes upon. I think this is misleading. "Spirituality" as it is used today covers too many different possibilities, capacities, and practices. It has a vague glow about it. But invoking it as a solution to any particular condition or set of problems isn't helpful. The term—I can hardly call it a "concept"—is just too mushy and fuzzy, and it seems to be in everyone's interest to keep it that way. So I wanted to examine how this word became so popular so quickly, and what developments had to occur in relevant fields of knowledge before a niche was created for it. Hence the title of the book. *The Ecology of Spirituality* is not about saving the planet, but about the intellectual environment for "spirituality," and how it developed.

"Ninety-two and still counting." That's the title of your first chapter, about the definitions of spirituality. Why so many? And what does this proliferation of definitions mean for scholars? And for the rest of us?

Several people have privately compared the quest for the meaning of spirituality to the quest for the meaning of "pornography"—"I can't define it, but I know it when I see it!" But this won't do for researchers and clinicians—or, in the long run, for any of us.

Most special terms are created or borrowed to be part of theories, and these theories are part of ongoing conversations within disciplines. The reason there are so many definitions of "spirituality" is in part because there is no stated, explicit theory behind it. It just floats. So, just about anyone can, ad hoc, create his or her own brand-new definition. The problem isn't that spirituality is intrinsically hard to define. It's that it isn't a *thing*, and it has no firm infrastructure in any theory. Yet, in fact there are several implied theories behind many of the definitions, drawn mostly from humanistic psychology and the Human Potential Movement of the 1970s. Both of these at least claimed to be part of psychology as the science of behavior and therefore were subject to the norms of coherence and validation within that discipline. Because there is no such rooting for today's use of "spirituality," the definitions are all over the map. "A sense of meaning," or "connectedness," are some of the frequently-used phrases. "Where do we look for spirituality? How do we know when we've found it?" are impossible questions to answer if we are guided only by current definitions. There are older definitions that avoid this problem, but these have not been widely embraced by people in many fields of work and study today.

Why are so many people drawn to the notion of spirituality?

The notion of spirituality seems to have filled a niche left open by the fading of the humanistic psychology that was so popular several decades ago. Also, it does relate to the different ways that many people are religious, ways different from the kinds of affiliations that seemed to be the norm 50+ years ago. But to speak of "spirituality" as an entity, something that has just recently been discovered, is very misleading. There is a wonderful book by Peggy Rosenthal, *Words and Values: Some Leading Words and Where They Lead Us*, written long before the current spirituality boom. The term "spirituality" surely belongs with Rosenthal's collection of "glow words."

What are some of spirituality's dangers?

Because spirituality is not the solid, genuine entity most of its advocates want it to be, whether it is dangerous or beneficial is a question that cannot be answered directly.

But I guess there are two levels of an answer that I can give. It is always dangerous to rely on a fuzzy, ill-defined concept and expect this concept to be helpful. Scales that measure "spiritual well-being" overlap so heavily with scales measuring general well-being that it is difficult to see how they add anything but confusion. One researcher who reviewed a huge number of studies on "spirituality and health" came to the conclusion that these lacked "scholarly infrastructure," and were therefore not worth much.

The second way to answer this question: within the sociology of religion, the word "spirituality" may be used to describe the manner in which persons in modern societies construct and navigate through choices and possible identities and fragments of identities. This sense of freedom to construct is as much a set of ideas and hopes as it is a reality. If we locate "spirituality" as a description of the subjective experience of this social process over a lifetime, within our kind of society, then the term gains some traction. It refers

to a style of personal development that is part of our culture and history, not a timeless universal concept. Within this sociological framework, other terms may be more revealing. At least some of what people who claim they are "spiritual but not religious" have is better labelled "residual religion." This points to the lingering effects of religious influences from earlier in life, selectively retained, sometimes without full recognition of their continuing power. When we think this way, we don't begin with global and fuzzy definitions, but with the life-trajectories of people coming of age in particular times and places. Just as there are distinctive ways to be "residually religious," so there may be a variety of "secularities" lingering on in our lives. An ahistorical and universal definition of "spirituality" will obscure what we want to learn about how people are now living within and outside traditional communities and groups of all kinds.

Could you explain what you mean when you say that religion has traditionally had an outer pole as well as an inner pole? Is the same true for spirituality? If not, what are the ramifications of that?

I began my investigation by looking at the marvelously clear work of Walter Principe, who in 1983 wrote an essay called "Toward Defining Spirituality." Principe offered a definition that placed "spirituality" within the study of religions. A person's "chosen ideal" and the striving to live toward that ideal is "spirituality" at the existential level. Guides and manuals to help reach this goal (Teresa of Ávila's *Interior Castle* is the example I draw on later in the book) are the next level, while the scholarly study of such guides is the third level. This is what I call a "two-poled definition." That "chosen ideal" need not be religiously-framed. It is, however, an objective pole, distinct from the person who pursues it. Such a clear definition—and clues to where to look for "spirituality" in this sense—is very different from what replaced it, those 92+ definitions. "Spirituality" is now most often described as an innate, universal human quality, without any reference to a "chosen ideal" or objective pole.

This purely "inner" or one-pole definition has triumphed in almost all the advocacy for spirituality. Note that the issue isn't religion vs. spirituality. A devotee of some sport or activity has an "objective pole" toward which to aim, usually with standards of excellence that are shared by fellow-enthusiasts. I am not an "excellent kayaker" by these standards, but I went out almost every day on one of the Collegeville lakes until they froze over, and was back on them when the ice had barely cleared (too soon to be paddling safely, in fact). So many people have written about the spirituality of sports that we can see a Principe-style definition at work. But, alas, the two-pole definition lost out to the idea of spirituality as a universal inborn possibility, without "chosen ideal" or "striving" being part of the definition. The current usages make it hard to identify or study all of what now comes under the umbrella of "spirituality."

" . . . it is hard to say anything really bad about spirituality."

Do you think practitioners pick and choose as they like from the now widely available religious and spiritual traditions? If so, what are the problems with picking and choosing?

Let me give you an example: Say I decorate my home with knick-knacks from a range of the world's cultures, with objects now mostly decorative rather than used in worship and rit-

ual. Perhaps I buy these from a catalogue produced by those who want to offer me choices and enhance my sense that I am a "spiritual" person. The principles of selection are my own tastes and preferences, as shaped by what surrounds me. What I omit or disregard is the earlier embeddedness of these objects in a set of traditions, practices and values, many of which could potentially challenge or disrupt my own. But I do not let them. I retain my role as the arbiter and purchaser of all this stuff and, if pushed on this, can claim that my access to more of the world's cultures and traditions than anyone had in the past also makes me automatically a more informed consumer of them.

Is this a silly example? Since I've received such catalogues, it's not entirely fanciful. And the attitude of arrogance about our privileged position and ability to turn the world's traditions into "resources" for our own self-enhancement is definitely present in many of the writings on spirituality.

Why, ultimately, can't spirituality be the Change that so many are looking for to usher in a new and better world?

First, because "spirituality" isn't a *thing* that we are missing and can find and incorporate into ourselves. But I think the answer to the previous question gives another reason. The process depicted there is one that lodges us firmly in the world of what we've got now. It is a marketing model of everything we do and are. Therefore, hoping to transcend all this world's current problems by drawing on "spirituality," something limited and restricted by the very conditions it hopes to alleviate, are futile. For example, will adding "spirituality" to health care make hospitals more humane, less depersonalized than they are now? It appears that any efforts to increase "spirituality" must work within the framework of hospitals as organizations, It cannot change them radically, as is sometimes hoped. Certain particular changes may alleviate conditions to some degree, but this isn't what advocates of gigantic sweeping Change want.

If spirituality has shortcomings, what should we be pursuing instead?

If we stick with Principe's original and almost obsolete definition, we can pursue chosen ideals that offer more than knick-knacks and that are truly worthy visions of what life can be. Spirituality by itself doesn't tell us what these are. It also doesn't tell us when our pursuit of ideals becomes dangerous, fanatical, or delusional. If we go with more contemporary definitions, spirituality is already so innate that it is hard to know how to "pursue" it. It's very like Maslow's "self-actualization," which leaves us wondering "What do I actually do to begin to self-actualize?" In one of the few scholarly articles on "How do I become spiritual?" the authors reduce the whole process to social role-modelling. That is simply not enough to understand what a guide such as *Interior Castle* provides. It shows how confused the whole state of "spirituality" now is.

I realize that a danger of thinking critically and carefully about a term everyone likes so much is that such a stance will be perceived as arrogant and negative. But analysis of concepts and definitions is necessary before jumping into debates over "spiritual but not religious," or pushing for more spirituality in healthcare or the workplace. That's what I hope my book can accomplish. □

Lucy Bregman is a professor of religion at Temple University in Philadelphia, and the author of eight books, including Preaching Death *(Baylor University Press, 2012) and her most recent* The Ecology of Spirituality *(Baylor University Press, 2014). She was a Resident Scholar at the Collegeville Institute in 2000/01. There she wrote, prayed with the monks, and kayaked on the two campus lakes.*

Praise Song

by Regina Bechtle

(Scientists say, "All that lives
longs to capture energy,
longs to reproduce.")

Praise for this
ancient drive
that threads through genomes,
thrusts, surges,
lunges, plunges,
flowers,

pounds corn into tortillas,
flavors teas and stews,
wakes traders and terrorists,
tears Cain from Abel.

Praise for this
bold longing
that spawns and seeds

life,
that roots our twisted
stabs
at loving

Regina Bechtle, SC, is a member of the Sisters of Charity of New York, based in the Bronx. A writer, poet, theologian, and retreat director, she has published poetry as well as articles on spirituality, religious life, and leadership.

Regina attended the Collegeville Institute's Poetry, Prose and Prayer *workshop in summer 2016. She was a Resident Scholar in spring 1996 and also participated in the* Spirituality of Trusteeship *and* Leadership for In-Between Times *consultations.*

Geese and Goslings. Photo by Carla M. Durand.

Unveiled

Eric Massanari

I walk along the nursing-home hallway, my mind already focused on the staff meeting for which I am late. Passing open doorways, muttering a reflexive "Good morning" to staff and residents, I mull over the morning's agenda, anticipating reports and preparing remarks. So it is only peripherally that I notice Sophie, who is sitting in her well-worn, blue recliner off in a corner of what we call "the pod."

The pod is an open space in the middle of each nursing care corridor, intended to be a cozy, social space for residents. In reality, most days it becomes a busy hub for staff and a congested crossroad of wheel chairs, body lifts, med carts, and laundry bins. Rarely is it the homey place it was meant to be.

Sophie seems to enjoy the busyness of the pod. The blue recliner in the corner is where she spends much of her day, watching and listening. Sophie's dementia has advanced to the point where she says very little, and what she does say emerges from many different moments in her long, rich life—or maybe sometimes from a life she has imagined. Sometimes all that emerges is a howl—whether of joy or lament is not always clear—that carries down hallways and penetrates walls. Sophie often sleeps in her chair. When she is awake, her gaze appears vacant, though I wonder if she's watching something that the rest of us are unable to perceive.

Sophie is in her chair. My mind registers this quotidian reality, along with the fact that I'm about to do my own usual thing and walk right on by. *Sophie is in her chair. Why not stop? I'm late for the meeting. I don't have time. No time? What does that mean?*

The mental pause is enough to break through my distraction and redirect my steps over to Sophie. I kneel down and gently rest my hand on hers. Sophie's gaze slowly shifts from the floor to my left ear. "Good morning, Sophie," I say.

A long silence passes, and then it's as if I'm watching a veil lift. Her eyes brighten and move to meet my gaze. A smile rises at the

corners of her mouth. Sophie's hand turns to hold mine, and her fingers—just skin over bones, really—interlace with my own.

"Oh! It's you!"

"Yes, it's me, Sophie. It's good to see you this morning."

Another silence. Breathing. Gazing. Then the veil is thrown aside completely and Sophie exclaims, "I think you are so alive!"

The ecstatic force of her words knocks me back on my heels. She is beaming at me now, her face bearing a youthful, playful grin I've never seen before, and I lose all sense of the busyness around us and the agendas burdening my mind.

"Sophie, I think you are so alive, too!"

Sophie throws her head back and releases a laugh that shakes her withering frame, then looks back into my eyes with a steady, reaching gaze. "Oh, I don't know," she says, "I think I will be going soon, but I don't know when."

As soon as these words leave her mouth, the fading begins. Sophie's smile lowers, her grip slackens, the glint in her eyes dims as her gaze slowly shifts to a place just over my left shoulder. The veil falls once again.

I don't want to leave her. I don't know how to turn my back on Sophie and walk away with this searing mix of joy and sorrow, clarity and confusion. I look around wondering if anyone else has witnessed Sophie's unveiling, but the busy pace of the pod continues to swirl and flow.

I'm left wondering about how easily I live somewhere other than where I am. How effortlessly I can be with a whole host of people other than the person I am actually with. By the powers of the mind I can be anywhere but here. Ruminating over the past, anticipating a future that is yet to be, or even wishing for a more preferable present, my own awareness often wears a veil—many veils—in the here and the now.

" . . . I wonder if she's watching something the rest of us are unable to perceive."

Meanwhile, *now* remains a singular opportunity for encounter and experience. *Here* is still the only real and possible place of being with the Beloved who is with us always but who is obscured by our veils of pretense and distraction. Presence longs for presence. We are free, of will and mind, to choose presence or absence. God has already made a choice, the choice for pervasively immanent and passionately abiding Presence.

This shared moment of presence with Sophie now becomes a remembrance, a story. You read it as words of black ink on the white page. Your gaze scans these words, your breath falls on this page. I think you are so alive.

Eric Massanari serves as the chaplain of Kidron Bethel Village retirement community in North Newton, Kansas, and as a spiritual director with individuals in his local community. He lives in Newton with his wife, Yolanda Kauffman, his teenage son, Noah, and a very lively Australian Shepherd/Border Collie named Mozzie. He practices writing in the in-between spaces of life. Eric attended the Collegeville Institute's Poetry, Prose and Prayer *writing workshop in the summer 2015.*

June 17, Sarria

by Sean Denmark

In the lobby the clerk,
if that's the word,
chuckles at Youtube videos.
Sitting on the rooftop terrace
beneath a surplus of clothespins,
evidence of slow business,
I rub a stone of ice on my ankle.
At dinner I talked with
the Frenchman to my right,
who was in Spain for
his honeymoon forty years ago.
He's been doing the Camino
in stages with his wife
for six summers now,
starting in Le Puys.
She's about to retire
& this is their final stretch.
To my left, a pilgrim was
excusing herself to field
calls from her son in Zambia,
where he had recently moved
to start a new job
only not to be paid for weeks.
We spoke of the burden
of advice's certainty.
I have five days left,
to the degree this is countable.
(To the degree the swelling
recedes.) Water slides
down my foot as the ice
accepts the shape
of my ankle. The problem,
the problem & wonder
of life, is we can't
write while we walk.

Sean Denmark is a teacher and writer who lives in New York City and hails from Alabama. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in St. Sebastian Review, EcoTheo Review, *and* Geez. *A participant in Collegeville's 2016* Poetry, Prose and Prayer *workshop with Michael Dennis Browne, he is working on a series of poems on walking the Camino de Santiago.*

Learning to Listen When Children Speak about God

Christine Ondrla

As a religious educator I've heard many different responses to my teaching, but I was not prepared for Pierre's comment after a presentation on the nativity stories. "Mrs. O," he said, "I did not understand a word you said." Attentive and respectful, Pierre was not criticizing me. He was teaching me.

When I thought about this encounter later, I realized, "Of course this 9-year-old did not understand my 53-year-old-married-mother-of-three insight, no matter how profound I thought it was." In that one sentence Pierre helped me understand that in working with children I needed to listen more and speak less. He challenged me to use age-appropriate religious language. Most of all he called me to be respectful and patient with the slow and steady work of God, who is calling and forming children and adults individually and together.

Rendering by Rosemary.

As I reflect on that moment, 16 years later, I am grateful for how it introduced me to a new way of looking at the religious life and work of children. Because of that encounter I have come to believe that children are important not for who they may become but for who they are. I have come to recognize that children can make God known to us in ways we cannot imagine.

Since then many children have challenged me to look at my life differently, with more imagination and joy. Because each child is unique, children have taught me to welcome those who are different from me and to savor experiences that I might not otherwise have chosen. Each time I look into the face of a child I am reminded that I, too, am a child of God, called to journey together with others. To help adults learn these truths is the work of children. It is their vocation, their call from God.

Thinking about the vocation of children changed everything for me. More than 26 years

after I began my career as a religious educator I was introduced to a new and beautiful way to help children develop and strengthen their relationship with God, a relationship that already existed. But I had to learn a new the way to speak to children. I had to learn a new vocabulary, and they were the ones to teach it to me. I asked questions. Here are some of their answers:

*

One day Mrs. O came into our classroom. She wanted to talk about vocation. I never heard that word before. She explained it was something God was calling us to do. She said, "calling" is another name for "vocation." If we want to do God's work, she said, we need to know our talents and how to use them. Then she asked us to think about what our talents are. She said they could be anything we love to do! Even if we didn't do it perfectly. I thought of one pretty quickly because I think my best talent is reading. I use it when I help the class understand things. But, I don't think I have discovered what my best talent is yet. She said that's okay, too, because we might have many and they might change when we get older. She really got me thinking.

One day, I took apart my mom's blender. She wasn't very happy. I helped her put it together. Then, I took apart a clock and put those parts in the blender. Once I did this, I wanted to take apart things and make them better. I even took my dad's clock and turned it into a car that works and still says the time. None of the kids I know can do this but they like watching me work. I'm very curious. I like to try new things. I'm unique. I have big dreams.

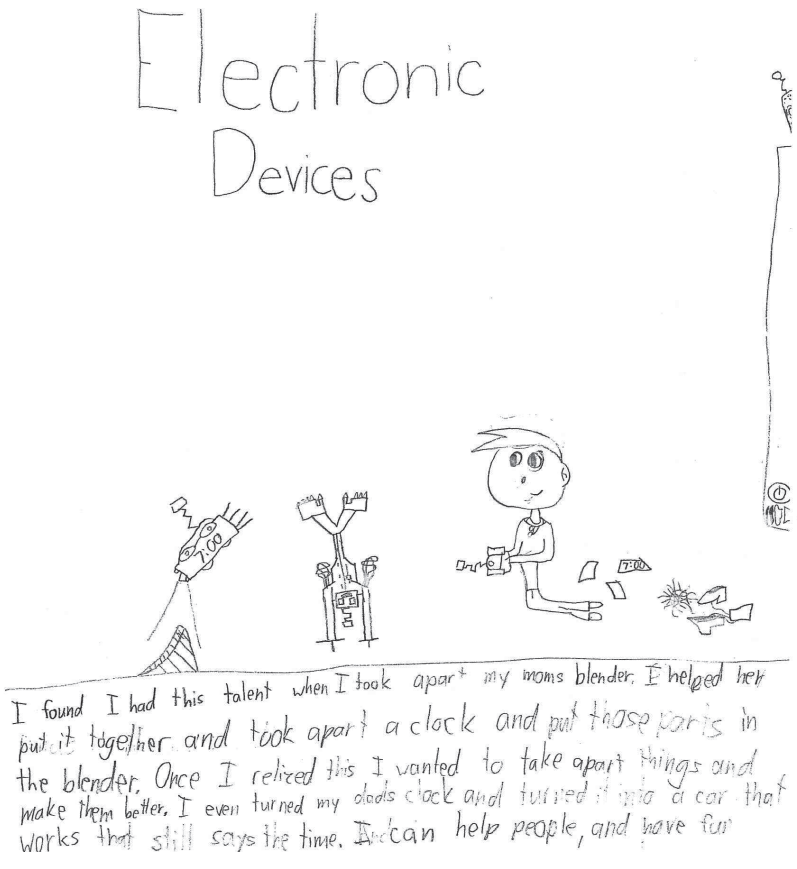
*

I get sick a lot. I miss days at school. I miss doing things with my friends. Sometimes this makes me sad or angry. Sometimes I think it's ok—it's just who I am. I still think and play and spend time with friends. Just in a different way. Some of my friends say I'm brave. They say they couldn't do what I do. They say I inspire them. I just try to keep being me. (the best me I can be).

*

My mom and dad volunteer at a homeless shelter. Some Saturday mornings they get up at 4:00 a.m.,

" . . . I have come to believe that children are important not for who they may become but for who they are."



Rendering by Quinn.

pack the food they bought into the trunk of our car and drive to St. John's church. Even when I was really young, in first and second grade, I wanted to go with them. When I turned nine they let me join them for the first time. There was a lot for me to do. I filled fruit bowls, toasted bread and served food. The people were friendly and happy we were there. I saw my dad talking to one of the men. My dad is 6 foot 4 but the man was even taller. I watched them talk for a long time. When the dishes were washed, the chairs and table put away and the bathrooms cleaned (I didn't have to help with that) we headed to our car. I was walking behind my dad when I saw he didn't have any shoes! When I asked him why, he said, "Someone needed them and I have more at home." I knew who that someone was. I still go to the shelter and I always come home with my shoes. But someday, when someone needs them, I know what I'll do. My dad showed me. □

Christine Ondrla is the retired Director of Religious Education at Ascension Catholic Parish in Oak Park, Illinois. Christine has authored Celebrating the Lectionary for Intermediate Children *published by Liturgy Training Publications. She writes the "Catholic Corner" for Children's Bulletins published by World Library Publications. She is working with the Collegeville Institute on the* Vocation Across the Life Span *project, focusing on the vocation of children. She lives in Oak Park, Illinois with her husband.*

American White Pelican. Photo by Bobby Ketchum (via Creative Commons license).

Faith Is Faith and Wind Is Wind

Betsy Johnson-Miller

Commonly referred to as the Witch Tree, the tree stands on a rock at the edge of Lake Superior. In 1731, a French explorer referenced it in a book, but many believe it was already two or three hundred-years old by then. Its current fame comes from a painting done by Dewey Albinson in the middle of the twentieth century. Some Native American women were burning tobacco at the base of the tree when he visited it, and assuming they were witches, Albinson dubbed his painting The Witch Tree. *Before long, the painting's name transferred to the tree itself. The name stuck until the 1970s, when a woman in the tribe suggested they call it by a different name, since Witch Tree had nothing to do with what the tree really was. They decided on Manito Geezhigaynce, or Spirit Little Cedar.*

There are moments we can point to and say, "There. That changed me." One of those moments happened in my life almost 35 years ago. I was at a church camp. One night during chapel the pastor wagged his finger at us and declared, "You are all sinners. You need to go outside right now and beg for God's forgiveness."

As we streamed out of the chapel, I found a tree and laid my 11-year old body down beside it. The inside of the building had been hot and loud. Out here, cool and quiet reigned. The crickets chirruped; a loon wailed from somewhere on the lake. I was supposed to pray, supposed to say "I am a sinner," but I was more interested in losing myself in that big sky. That's when it happened—my heart

grew big enough to hold the black ocean of stars. I experienced a surging, aching tide of light. I felt God.

My spirit has been hungry for that kind of awe ever since. That is why years later I applied for (and received) a grant to visit sacred places in Minnesota. I went to a polka mass and prayed as the accordions oompa'd. I visited the Petroglyphs that Native Americans had carved into rocks thousands of years ago. But the experience I was saving until last was a visit to the Spirit Little Cedar tree. A colleague had told me, "It is one of the most sacred places I have ever been." So one morning, my husband and I climbed into our car and drove north, hugging the rugged shoreline of Lake Superior until we arrived in Grand Portage, Minnesota, only a few miles from the Canadian border.

"Another reason the tree became significant had to do with awe."

In order to see the tree, we needed a guide from the Ojibwe tribe. With the help of the Tribal Council Headquarters we met up with a man I'll call Joe, who works at a museum in an old log schoolhouse.

Before he took us to the tree, Joe suggested that we sit and talk for a while. Joe is over six feet tall with a long ponytail curling down his broad back. He led us to a rough stone bench that easily accommodated all three of us and explained that the tree stands on a point of land that juts out into the water. The Ojibwe believed that water and air spirits continually engaged in skirmishes there, which made it a dangerous point to get around. Because people had to go around it to get anywhere, they began to leave offerings at the tree, hoping to appease the warring spirits.

Another reason the tree became significant simply had to do with awe. This tree had faced centuries of water, winter, sun, and wind, and it had persevered. People figured the spirits who had helped the tree survive could help them do the same. Joe told us that when people left offerings at the tree it wasn't because the tree itself was holy. It was a way of asking, "Hey, can I get some of that?"

There was one more reason people left offerings, Joe told us, and that was because the water and air spirits who resided there also needed to ask for help from greater spirits. "By making an offering, you give them something they can offer to the spirits they seek help from. Mostly, people leave tobacco, and tobacco means anything that can be burned as an offering—sticks, dried grass, bark. When we get to the tree, you'll see bundles of 'tobacco' tied to the surrounding trees. But people also leave shiny things, because it was thought that the shiny things either scared the mischievous spirits away or that some spirits liked them."

Joe pushed his big silver sunglasses higher up on his nose. "Well, I could talk all day, but I suppose you want to see the tree. Why don't you follow me in your car?" Five minutes later, Joe's van pulled into a gravel lot, and we parked beside him.

The trail we followed to get to the tree climbed up a small rise and curved away from the lake, but before long, it veered back toward the big water. Windblown pines lay in piles beside the trail, like stacks of dead bodies. As the trail descended, tall stones closed in on us. I sensed that I was passing from my

normal life into an older world, one where men carried a hundred and eighty pounds of beaver pelts on their backs to get to their boats during the height of the fur trade. Or one even older than that, where ancient magic ruled and the people who fished this generous and dangerous lake knew that it could kill them instantly. Here survival and respect went hand in hand.

In an empty space framed by branches, the tree stood. Old and scraggly, it was no more than fifteen feet tall. But the longer I looked at it and thought about what Joe had said, the more I felt as if I was in the presence of the extraordinary.

Except for a shock of leafy green hair that stuck almost straight up, most of the tree was trunk—gnarled, curved, and the dead-gray of driftwood. One section of the trunk had a maze carved into it, but not one done by human hands. Some force of nature had tattooed waves into the tree's bark, leaving it marked, claimed by the lake. Its roots draped over the rock. So little held it in place that the Spirit Little Cedar seemed to defy the laws of gravity.

"I realized I was in a thin place, a place where . . . the veil between this world and the other world grows diaphanous."

Many of the trees around me had little fabric bundles tied to them. I wished I had brought my own, as I numbered myself among the many who had come here, seeking.

"We can walk down there," Joe said, gesturing to the fence blocking our way. He must have noticed my surprise. "We don't have a gate because we want to discourage folks from thinking they can go down there whenever they want," he said. Joe climbed over the fence, and we followed. When we reached the tree, it was impossible not to personify it—her—standing on a rock throne like a queen, reigning over the immense water at her feet. Or was she a crone—wizened and wise? Why shouldn't I drop to my knees in adoration?

" . . . I numbered myself among the many who had come here, seeking."

"You can touch it. Just don't lean on it," Joe said with a smile. Then he added, "I'll be back up there waiting for you. Take your time."

I considered asking the tree to bless me. After all, it was known for its perseverance, its ability to face everything the Big Out There had thrown at it, like the ten inches of ice that once coated it, Joe had said. But Joe had also said that the tree wasn't a thing to worship, so I touched the part of the trunk that looked like waves and whispered, "*Namaste*," or "The light in me bows to the light in you." My hand rested on the warm bark, and then I put my hand to my heart.

I wanted not only the tree's perseverance, but its ability to stand in the midst of warring spirits. How many days had I felt as if I would drown in my restlessness, my desire to find and feel the sacred once more? Was it possible to honor both my need to move and to learn how to lift my arms to the sky, standing with a fierce and rooted grace?

I opened my bag to pull out a shiny offering, but I had left my wallet back in the glove box. Now what? I found tobacco—a purple flower, a curl of birch bark, and an aspen leaf—and set the bundle at the base of Spirit Little Cedar. As I stepped back and looked at the tree once more, I realized I was in a thin place, a place where, according to Celtic belief, the veil between this world and the other world grows diaphanous. Where we open to majesty, wonder, Presence. Where we stand at an edge and see the holy.

Here I am.

That was *call* language. But what was I called to? I touched the waves on her trunk once more. I was called to the holy work of paying attention, the holy work of being like the girl I once was—one who went out into the world and grew still, knowing the divine would find her.

I felt called to the holy work of being like this tree, alive in the light and the darkness, the wind and the snow, taking the restless waves into myself and doing my best to make something beautiful from them. "Good luck," I whispered, once again putting my hand to my heart, as if that would somehow seal this moment inside.

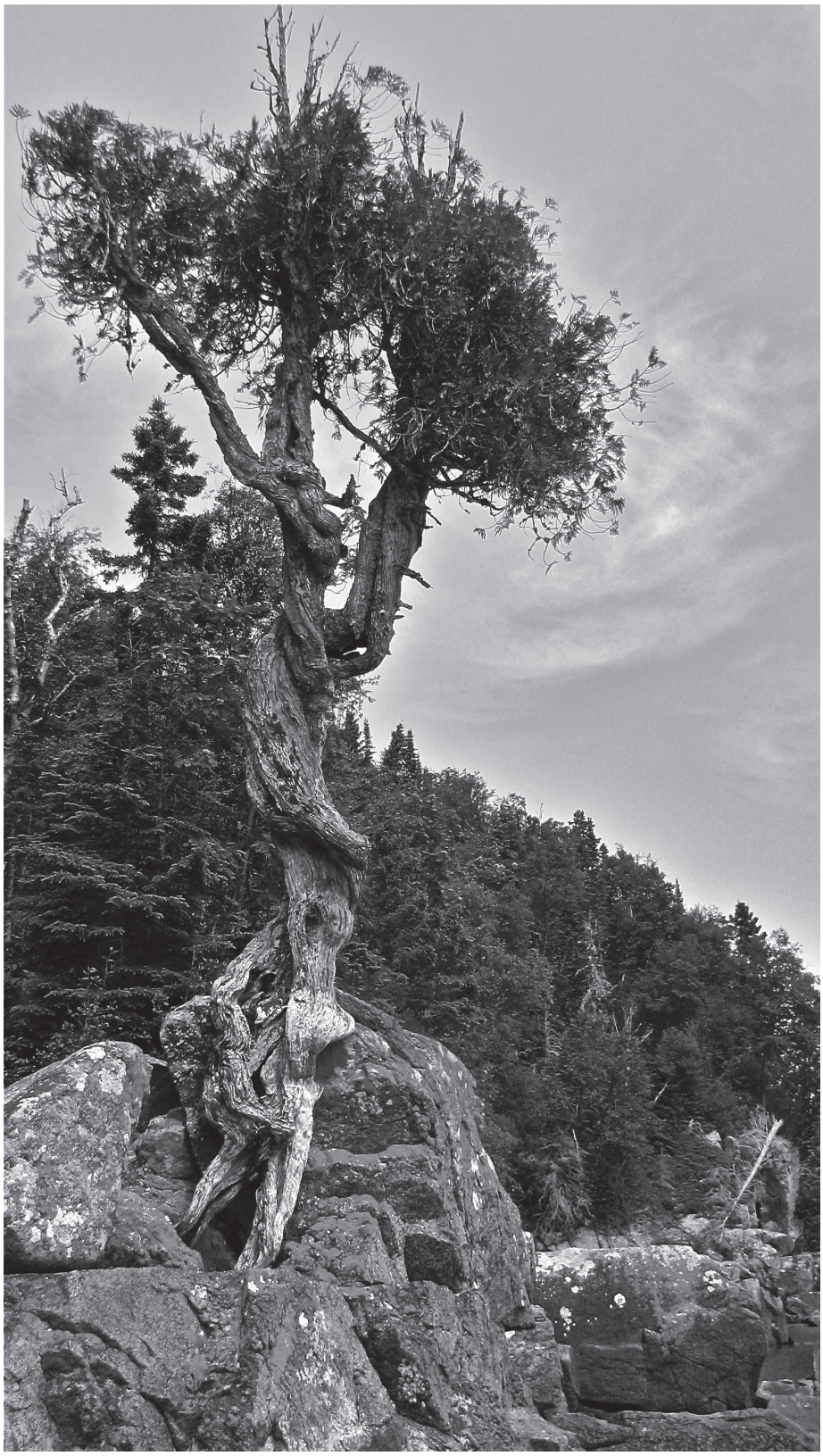
After my husband had made his offering, we joined Joe again and started the walk back. Joe said that every time he comes to the tree he feels a little afraid. He never knows if this will be the time when the tree is no longer there, when it lies helpless in the waves below as they smash it against the rocks "But it is still here." He shrugged his big shoulders. "Faith is faith, and wind is wind."

When we reached the small parking lot, Joe said, "You know, we have a word, *bimaadiziwin*—it means a good spirit life. Sun, water, rocks, and trees, the sounds of all the animals. The tree has *bimaadiziwin*."

"Where we open to majesty, wonder, Presence. Where we stand at an edge and see the holy."

I settled myself in the seat beside my husband. As we turned toward home, I stared at the big water and whispered, "*Bimaadiziwin*." I now had a word for the kind of life I seek. □

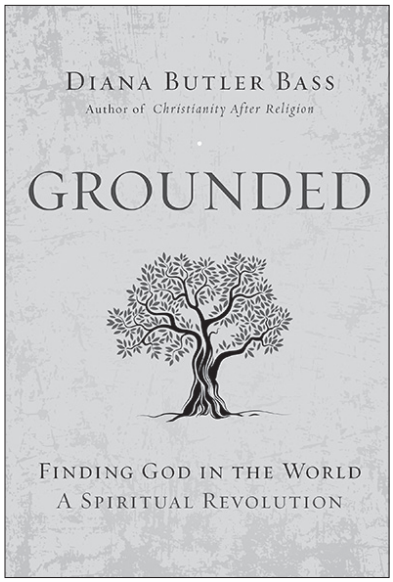
Betsy Johnson-Miller works as a communications associate at the Collegeville Institute and teaches at the College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University. She has published two books of poetry, and her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Alaska Quarterly Review, Prairie Schooner, *and* Poet Lore.



Spirit Little Cedar. Photo by Shane Miller.

BOOKREVIEW

What Kind of God Do You Want?



Grounded: Finding God in the World—A Spiritual Revolution.
By Diana Butler Bass. Harper Collins, 336 pp., $26.99; paperback $14.99.

Where is God? Unpacking that question drives Diana Butler Bass's notable new book. Butler Bass writes, "Not so long ago, believers confidently asserted that . . . we occupied a three-tiered universe, with heaven above, where God lived; the world below, where we lived; and the underworld, where we feared we might go after death." What mediated between those three spaces was the church, which acted as a "kind of holy elevator."

However, that view of the universe and our place in it no longer holds for many Christians. "The world, not heaven, is the sacred stage of our times," Butler Bass writes. We now live "in a theologically flattened world." Heaven is not above and hell is not below—they are right here, right now. God is no longer distant and, as a result, we have developed a theological intimacy with the world: "God can be found at the seashore, in a sunset, in the gardens we plant, at home, in the work we do, in the games we watch or play, in the stories that entertain us, in good food and good company, when we eat, drink, laugh, and even make love."

A theology of transcendence and distance has been replaced by a theology that is more immanent and proximate. "What was once reserved for a few saints has now become the quest of millions around the planet—to be able to touch, feel, and know God for one's self." For Butler Bass, this translates into "divine nearness," and "a quotidian God, whose holiness is revealed in worldly things, and toward divine simplicity, whose connections are woven through all that is."

According to Pew Research Center data, about 23 percent of adult Americans are religious "nones"—people who identify themselves as atheists or agnostics, or who say that their religion is "nothing in particular." For Butler Bass, it isn't that people don't believe anymore. "People believe, but they believe differently than they once did." What does this look like? She states that the answer is simpler than most of us would guess. What people want is "to claim personal agency" in their lives. So we grow our own food, craft our own beer, make our own playlists. "In every arena we customize and personalize our lives," Butler Bass states. Therefore, she concludes, "It makes perfect sense that we are making our spiritual lives as well, crafting a new theology. And that God is far more personal and close at hand."

The book opens with the physical world, with chapters named "Dirt," "Water," and "Sky." In the first chapter, Butler Bass talks about

how, as a girl, she didn't like the outdoors. On a Girl Scout retreat, she decided that "the earth was a threatening and inhospitable place" where she found critters in her sleeping bag and where she cried so hard that her troop leader called her mother to come and rescue her "from the hell of outdoors." But then her family moved to the country, and after exploring this new world day after day with her brother and sister, she turned into "an adolescent girl accidentally embodying the spirit of Thoreau, finding heaven under my feet as much as over my head."

In "Water" she highlights not only the importance of water in religion (think the Ganges and the Jordan) but also discusses the water crisis that many are predicting in the not-too-distant future. She quotes researcher Jason Smerdon, who worries that, "the twenty-first century projections [of upcoming water shortages] make the [previous] megadroughts seem like quaint walks through the Garden of Eden."

In the second half of the book, Butler Bass examines the geography of humans, with chapters on subjects such as "Roots," "Home," and "Neighborhood." Throughout the book she interweaves personal narrative with subjects like Jewish theology, discussions on DNA and family systems, Pew Research Center data, and Supreme Court decisions. In the chapter "Sky," for example, Butler Bass describes a family retreat in the Wind River Range in Wyoming, a couple of hours east of Yellowstone. The director warned everyone to bring flashlights and to take care after dark, since people who lived in cities were not used to what night was like without any electric lights. One night she forgot to grab a flashlight and, she writes, "when the sun completely set, it seemed like a thick wool blanket had been pulled over my head." After a few minutes her eyes adjusted, and she began to tremble in the face of more stars than she had ever seen before. She writes:

> Without a moment's reflection, the words of an old hymn sounded in my mind: "Consider all the worlds thy hands have made."
>
> Consider. Indeed, the word "consider," which comes from the French and literally means to "observe the stars," now serves as a call to reflect upon or study intensely. Consider the sky. That night in Wyoming, I understood that the sky was much more than I knew. It was compelling and frightening. I considered not only my strange insignificance, but I considered God, the one who is Light and made the lights.

As I reflected on Butler Bass' themes, I recalled my visit to a scrubby little tree called the Spirit Little Cedar by the Ojibwe, who consider it sacred. As I touched the rough bark and listened to the pounding waves of Lake Superior below it, I felt as if I was standing in a "thin place," a place where, according to Celtic belief, the veil between this world and the other world grows gossamer. Standing there, I could feel myself opening to wonder and encountering the holy. With that experience in mind, much of Butler Bass' book resonated with me.

Another part of me resisted her claims. I recalled my visit to the Church of Scientology in St. Paul. There I was promised the tools and methods for finding my own answers, my own truths about my life and me. We are narrative creatures, and many of us—myself included—are looking for a Good Story that will bring meaning to our lives. But the vision offered by the Church of Scientology—and to a lesser extent by Butler Bass—seemed too narrow. Religion should not begin and end with me. What is to

prevent a faith like that from devolving into a greater concern with getting warm fuzzies for ourselves than with doing the hard work of loving our neighbors—inside and outside our communities of faith?

Butler Bass finishes her book with the idea that we are in the midst of a spiritual revolution and that "finding God in the world, is an invitation to new birth, most especially for religion." As "the earth groans for salvation," she writes, it is time for "the church to wake up. There is nothing worse than sleeping through a revolution."

It is an impassioned plea, and one that the church would do well to heed. Experiencing God in all God has made is an important corrective to the false secular/sacred dichotomy. But reading the book, it was hard not to wonder which is more dangerous or disturbing—a distant God, or a customizable one? □

Reviewed by Betsy Johnson-Miller, who works as a communications associate at the Collegeville Institute and teaches at the College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University.

Seagull. Photo by Vodeck (via Creative Commons license).

Swan Fanning. Photo by Ellen Riggins.

Ecumenical News

Historic, but Contested, Orthodox Council

Orthodox leaders concluded a historic council June 19-26, pledging dialogue with other churches, while also reaffirming "no compromise" when it comes to Orthodox teachings.

"The Orthodox church, faithful to the unanimous apostolic tradition and her sacramental experience, is the authentic continuation of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church as confessed in the Creed and confirmed by the teaching of the Church Fathers," the Orthodox representatives said in a final message.

The statement was issued at the end of the Holy and Great Council, attended in Crete by 220 Orthodox bishops and archbishops, as well as 70 official advisers. It said the signatories were full of "thanksgiving and praise" that the gathering had taken place, despite boycotts by four of the 14 Orthodox churches, including the world's largest Orthodox body, the Russian Orthodox Church, which constitutes between two-thirds and half of all Orthodox believers. The message added that the Council's key priority had been "to proclaim the unity of the Orthodox church" with "a prophetic voice that cannot be silenced."

The week-long Council, widely believed the first on such a scale for 1,200 years, ended with a June 26 liturgy at Chania's Sts. Peter and Paul Basilica, presided over by its convener, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople.

For many observers the decisions by the Antioch Patriarchate and Orthodox churches in Georgia and Bulgaria and Russia to stay away suggest that the Orthodox Church is anything but unified, and points to continued tensions within Orthodoxy.

Despite the absence of key players, the council adopted joint declarations on Orthodox mission, diaspora affairs, church autonomy, fasting, the environment, and ties with other Christian churches, as well as a document on marriage, which said heterosexual unions were "an indispensable condition for marriage," and barred church members from "same-sex unions or any other form of cohabitation."

Speaking on June 24, the Council spokesman, Archbishop Job Getcha of Telmessos, said the Council's decisions would be binding for all Orthodox bodies, despite the decisions by the four churches to skip the Crete gathering. As proof, he added that voting procedures were "valid in democratic countries" even if some citizens chose not to participate.

However, this was rejected on June 27 by an official from Russia's Orthodox church, which cautioned it may not recognize moves by the Crete Council. "Comparing a church council to democratic procedures is hardly fitting or relevant—there'll be great embarrassment if church rules are checked for their correspondence to democratic norms," Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, deputy head of the Russian church's external relations department, told the Interfax-Religion news agency. "There's been no democracy in the church since the first centuries, and there won't be now, since democracy means the rule of people, and power in the church belongs to God."

In its document on ecumenical relations with other Christian denominations, the Council said Orthodox churches had "participated in the ecumenical movement from its outset," seeing this as "a consistent expression of the apostolic faith and tradition in new historical circumstances." It added that most were still involved at national, regional, and international levels, despite the ecumenical movement's current "deep crisis," and said each church should keep others informed of its engagement "to express solidarity and unity."

"The Orthodox church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian churches and confessions that are not in communion with her, and believes her relations with them should be based on the most speedy and objective clarification possible of the whole ecclesiological question—most especially of their more general teachings on sacraments, grace, priesthood and apostolic succession," added the document, which made no direct reference to the Catholic church.

Council sources said a total of nine women had been included among the 290 delegates for the first time at a major Orthodox meeting, and said it was hoped a proposal, noted in the final message, for the Council to become "a regular institution, convened every seven or ten years," would be acted on.

However, in his June 27 Interfax statement, Balashov said the Russian Orthodox church would "make an attentive study" of the final documents and "decide its attitude" to them. In a July meeting the Russian Orthodox Church declared that the gathering of Orthodox leaders on Crete was "an important event in the history of the conciliar process," but that it could not be called "pan-Orthodox" because of the absence of four of the 14 independent Orthodox churches.

Russian church officials have also warned the Ecumenical Patriarch, who is recognized as holding honorary first place among Orthodox primates, not to act on a July 16 resolution by Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, calling on him to declare the Ukrainian Orthodox Church independent from the Moscow Patriarchate. Departure of the Ukrainian Church would be a significant blow to the Russian Orthodox Church in terms of size, and possibly of influence.

In its document on inter-church ties, the Council noted that most Orthodox churches were members of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches, "contributing with all means at their disposal." However, it added that the churches of Georgia and Bulgaria had withdrawn from the World Council of Churches in 1997-8, and had "their own particular opinion" about its work, while the whole Orthodox communion had "reservations concerning paramount issues of faith and order," believing non-Orthodox churches had "diverged from the true faith of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church."

"The Orthodox church's participation in the WCC does not signify that she accepts the notion of the 'equality of confessions'—in no way is she able to accept the unity of the church as an inter-confessional compromise," the document said. "The unity sought within the WCC cannot simply be the product of theological agreements, but must be founded on the unity of faith, preserved in the sacraments and lived out in the Orthodox church. . . . From its inclusion in the WCC, it does not ensue that each church is obliged to regard the other churches as churches in the true and full sense." □

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Collegeville Institute
Board Profile

Mary Pickard

Unitarian—St. Paul, Minnesota—Board Member since 2012

Philosopher Martin Heidegger understands truth as uncovering reality. Board member Mary Pickard is a truth seeker whose life has revolved around learning and telling the unseen stories of the notable work of others. Mary says, "Throughout my life, I have been curious about how different people view the world, how they make sense of the world, and how they understand their role in the world."

Mary was born in Michigan of Canadian immigrant parents and grew up in southern Minnesota. From a young age, she had close friends from many religious traditions. Her childcare provider was Catholic. She attended Baptist bible school in the summer. Her best friend in elementary school was Jewish, and with a friend and her family she used to go to revival meetings in Minneapolis. When she was 11 years old, she joined the Episcopal Church.

As she grew older Mary found joy at the Unity Church Unitarian in St. Paul. "It is a church and community where I feel encouraged and challenged to continue my own spiritual development as a 'lifelong seeker' and to participate in the development of others," Mary says. "I love the diversity of thought, the commitment to justice, and the big arms I feel holding me every Sunday during services."

Even when she was only five years old, Mary dreamed of becoming a journalist. When she wrote a feature story about two men who were riding their motorcycles cross country from Rochester to California, she learned how powerful it can be to bring a story to people. "I was moved to tears when I realized how the power of story can tap into the needs and desires of readers," she says.

After four years as a writer, Mary became involved in philanthropy and enjoyed writing about other people's dreams and visions—asking questions, and helping to support the remarkable work of others. She spent 35 years working with the Travelers Foundation, retiring as president, and feels most proud of the foundation's work supporting the development of grassroots community leaders in neighborhoods, the arts, and education. From there, Mary went to work with the GHR Foundation where she was particularly excited about developing and implementing a strat-

egy to support Catholic sisters in the United States and Africa. Now retired after 45 years in philanthropy, Mary declares, "My career was just about the best anyone could hope for. I loved the work and I loved the people I worked with. This is more than most people get in a lifetime. I am thankful to have had a true vocation and not simply a job."

Mary discovered the Collegeville Institute through her work with a philanthropic family who noticed her deep commitment to faith-based programs. She became excited about the opportunity to serve on the Collegeville Institute board after learning more about its mission and recognizing how she could contribute to its work through her knowledge and skills. "I enjoy being with people who are committed to finding 'the unity that lies hidden in diversity,' so being a member of the board is a good fit for me," Mary says. She believes that the role of faith leaders—both lay and "official"—is critically important today, and she appreciates how the Collegeville Institute helps those leaders explore their own views, have those views challenged, research and write about them, and learn about other perspectives. Mary says, "Whether it is pastors learning how to lead parishes toward more civic engagement, or someone being given the chance to write, research or create, our program participants are better able to embrace differences."

Ecumenism gives us an opportunity to see beyond the symbols, habits and beliefs we hold to engage in a larger mission of finding and expressing human love, Mary believes. "Ironically, it challenges us to live the theology we say we profess within our own belief systems in a diverse world," she says.

Mary's spiritual work is often about nurturing the light in herself and in others. She states, "Spirituality is connecting to a larger universe and seeing beyond the narrowness of daily things, yet also seeing the light in all things daily. It means asking some of the larger questions about purpose, meaning, and our place with God." She sees spirituality as a practice of being in the moment in this world—connecting with someone we love, finding our own voices, recognizing the gifts of others, seeing the humanity of all.

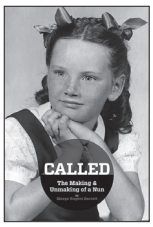
Living her spirituality is often about discovering that which is unseen—in others, in herself, in community, and in the universe, Mary finds. What helps her is working with extraordinary people, being supported by her church, encountering art, listening to those who need it, and discovering her own voice. One of her favorite quotes is from the current Dalai Lama: "Kindness is my true religion. . . . All religions can learn from one another; their ultimate goal is to produce better human beings who will be more tolerant, more compassionate and less selfish."

Mary likes to read mystery novels, to cook, and to entertain in order to introduce new people to one another. She practices yoga, goes to the theater for fresh perspectives, and listens to any live music, especially if it includes the violin. She also enjoys traveling, particularly with groups on pilgrimage. In 2015 she traveled with a group of 70 from St. Paul to Montgomery and Selma, Alabama for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the fight for voting rights. In January 2016, she traveled with 22 people from various faiths (Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, and Unitarian) to Israel and Palestine to better understand the conflict and those working for peace. Reacting to this experience, she said, "I was very disturbed about what I saw and heard, but also hopeful. I was moved by the courageous men and women in the peace movement—both Israeli and Palestinian—often working together in a world where they were supposed to be enemies. I was inspired by their courage, skills and leadership." Mary recognizes that in a world filled with conflict, "the peace builders must sing louder."

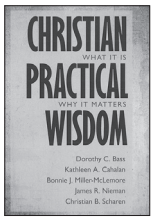
Snowy Egret. Photo by Robb Hannawacker (via Creative Commons license).

News of Collegeville Institute **Program Participants & Scholars,** Autumn 2016

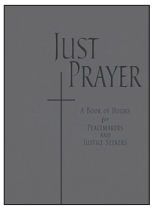
Brian Bantum's (Summer 2014) essay "Full Humanity" was published in the *Christian Century* (March 8, 2016). The article is part of the Black Lives Matter Symposium.



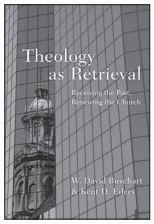
Marge Rogers Barrett's (Summer writing workshop coach) latest book, *Called: The Making and Unmaking of a Nun*, was published by Antrim House (2016). It tells of her calling by God and her later calling to marriage, motherhood, and teaching.



Dorothy Bass, Kathleen Cahalan, Bonnie Miller-McLemore, James Nieman, and **Christian Scharen**, all members of the Collegeville Institute's *Seminar on Christian Practical Wisdom*, collaboratively authored *Christian Practical Wisdom: What It Is, Why It Matters* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016).



Alison Benders' (Summer 2013) book, *Just Prayer: A Book of Hours for Peacemakers and Justice Seekers* (Liturgical Press, 2015), received the Association of Catholic Publishers's Excellence in Publishing award in the category of Prayer and Spirituality.



W. David Buschart (1995/96) and Kent Eilers co-authored *Theology as Retrieval: Receiving the Past, Renewing the Church* (InterVarsity Press Academic, 2015).

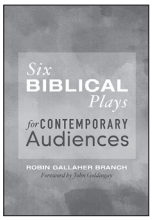
Michael Dennis Browne (Summer writing workshop facilitator) collaborated as a lyricist for Craig Hella Johnson's oratorio *Considering Matthew Shepherd*, a musical response to the 1998 beating and murder of Matthew Shepherd in Laramie, Wyoming. *Conspirare* premiered and recorded the work in February 2016. The two-disk CD set was released on September 9 by Harmonia Mundi. To learn more about the project, visit conspirare.org.

Ruth Everhart's (Summer 2012, 2013) memoir, *Ruined*, was published by Tyndale House in 2016. Ruth worked on this book during her participation in the *Apart, and Yet a Part* writing workshop.

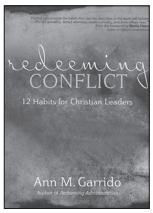
Tom Fate (Summer 2010, 2012, 2014; Fall 2013) regularly reviews books for the *Chicago Tribune*. Last March Tom reviewed *Fracture: Essays, Poems, and Stories on Fracking in America* (Ice Cube Press, 2016), edited by **Taylor Brorby** (Summer 2014) and Stefanie Brook Trout. His review can be accessed at chicagotribune.com.

Melissa Florer-Bixler's (Summer 2013, 2016) essay "Children at the Grave" was published in the *Christian Century* (March 8, 2016).

Meghan Florian (Fall 2013, Summer 2014) worked on her essay "A Few More Miles" during her summer workshop. The piece was published in the Winter/Spring 2016 issue of *Lunch Ticket* and can be accessed at lunchticket.org.

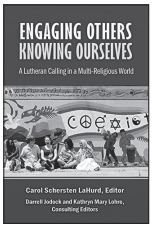


Robin Gallaher Branch (Fall 2015) reports several new publications, including an article on Benedict and Scholastica that appeared in the Spring 2016 issue of *Abbey Banner*. Her article kicked-off a new series on the lives of Benedictine saints. Her most recent book, *Six Biblical Plays for Contemporary Audiences*, was published by Cascade Books, an imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers (2016).



Ann Garrido's (Summer 2015) book *Redeeming Conflict: 12 Habits for Christian Leaders* was published by Ave Maria Press (2016).

Dieter Heinzl (Summer 2013) published an essay in the *Christian Century* (April 27, 2016) under the heading "Road," as part of an ongoing series of narrative essays sponsored by a grant from the Frederick Buechner Foundation.

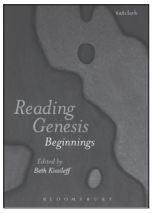


Darrell Jodock (1982/83 and Board Member) was a consulting editor for *Engaging Others, Knowing Ourselves: A Lutheran Calling in a Multi-Religious World* (Lutheran University Press, 2016).

Heidi Haverkamp (Summer 2011) writes, "My week with you made me believe that I could, in fact, be both a pastor and a writer." Her book *My Advent in Narnia: Reflections for the Season* was published by Westminster John Knox Press (2015). Her article "The Mosque Next Door: Getting to Know Our Muslim Neighbors" appeared in the *Christian Century* (September 2015), and she writes regularly for *Century Blogs*.

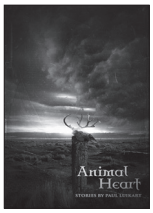
John Keenan's (Fall 2011) book, *The Emptied Christ of Philippians: Mahāyāna Meditations*, was published by Wipf and Stock Publishers (December 2015).

Jill Kandel (Summer 2013), whose book *So Many Africas: Six Years in a Zambian Village* (Autumn House Press, 2015) won the 2015 Sarton Women's Book Award in the memoir category, writes "Collegeville was such a wonderful place to work on my book and finish the last arrangements of all the chapters. Thank you for being a part of my writing journey!"



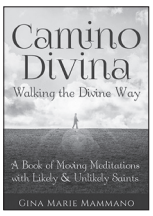
Beth Kissileff (Summer 2010) edited *Reading Genesis: Beginnings* (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016).

John P. Leggett (Summer 2010) is part of the *Christian Century* blog network. His article "Confusing Grace" was published on April 4, 2016.

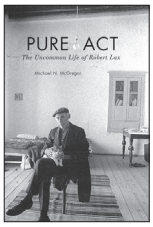


Paul Luikart's (Summer 2015) first book, *Animal Heart* (Hyperborea Publishing, 2016), is a collection of literary short fiction. Paul writes, "I've spent the majority of my professional life in the field of homeless services, while my formal education has been entirely in creative writing. *Animal Heart* is essentially a combination of these two. In the majority of the stories, I examine the extreme struggles of people in poverty. But I hope I've taken things a bit further. I hope I've piqued my readers' senses of compassion through plain old compelling storytelling."

Gina Marie Mammano (Summer 2014) has published *Camino Divina—Walking the Divine Way: A Book of Moving Meditations with Likely and Unlikely Saints* (Skylight Paths Publishing, 2016).



Michael McGregor (Fall 2011; Summer writing workshop participant and coach) was awarded second prize in the biography category of the Association of Catholic Publishers' 2016 Excel-



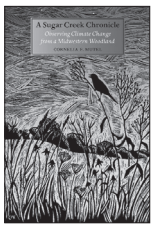
lence in Publishing Awards for his book *Pure Act: The Uncommon Life of Robert Lax* (Fordham University Press, 2015).

Joe McHugh (Fall 2014) writes regularly for a variety of publications. Three such pieces are "Touching God's Wilder Side" (*Patheos*, August 21, 2015); "The Grace of Mattering: Safety from Shame" (*Weavings*); and "Praying Luke's Stories" (*St. Anthony Messenger*, January 2016).

MaryAnn McKibben Dana (Summer 2010, 2011, 2014) published "The Joy of Stuff: Incarnation and the Kon-Mari Method" in the *Christian Century* (March 16, 2016). She received the 2016 David Steele Distinguished Writer Award from the Presbyterian Writers Guild. Previous winners include **Eugene Peterson** (summer writing workshop facilitator) and **Kathleen Norris** (1991/92, 1993/94, Fall 2011).

Najeeb Michaeel, OP (2012/13) was featured in the March 19, 2016 issue of *World* magazine. The article "Priest on a Mission" highlights the work that Fr. Najeeb is doing to save endangered manuscripts.

Michele (Mickie) **Micklewright** (Summer 2013) writes, "I have published three pieces since my participation in the *Believing in Writing* summer workshop, two of which I worked on while in Collegeville. I certainly appreciated the workshop sessions, writing and quiet time, and community gatherings that were offered." Her publications include: "Meaning, Relational Meditation and the Facilitation of Momentary Glimpses" (*Plain Views*: Healthcare Chaplaincy Network, April 20, 2016); a memoir excerpt "In the Dawn of Shadows" (*Witness*: Black Mountain Institute, October 25, 2014); and "Compartmentalizing" (*Scintilla Press*, Winter 2014).



Cornelia (Connie) **Mutel** (Summer 2014) published *A Sugar Creek Chronicle: Observing Climate Change from a Midwestern Woodland* (University of Iowa Press, 2016). You can access her interview about the book at iowapublicradio.org.

Heidi Neumark (Summer 2011, 2016) received the 2015 INDIEFAB Gold Award in the autobiography and memoir category for her book *Hidden Inheritance: Family, Secrets, Memory and Faith* (Abingdon Press, 2015).

James Nieman's (Collegeville Institute Seminars participant) essay "What a Congregation Knows: The Deep Wisdom Behind Odd Practices" was published in the *Christian Century* (April 27, 2016).

Weldon Nisly (2000/01, Fall 2007, Spring 2015) took part in a nine-month electronic conversation on "Christian Faithfulness and Human Sexuality." In February 2016 Weldon was a conversation partner on the topic of "Churches and the LGBT Community." More information can be accessed at respectfulconversation.net.

Angela O'Donnell's (Summer 2012, 2014, 2016) book *Flannery O'Connor: Fiction Fired by Faith* (Liturgical Press, 2015) was awarded first prize for biography in the Association of Catholic Publishers' 2016 Excellence in Publishing Awards.

Glenn Olsen (1978/79) writes, "In 2016 I received a Festschrift published by the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies at the University of Toronto. Another Collegeville Institute Scholar, **Carol Neel** (Fall 1992, 2007/08), contributed a chapter to the Festschrift. I also received the Madeleine Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts and Humanities from the 2016 Madeleine Festival of the Arts and Humanities."

L. Roger Owens (Summer 2016) published "Why Christians Should Talk About Obama's Visit to Hiroshima" in the *Century Blogs* (June 2, 2016).

Craig Phillips's (Short-term scholar, Spring 2016) article "Cultural-Linguistic Resources for Interreligous and Ecumenical Dialogue" appeared in *Pathways for Inter-Religious Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). In addition, his article "Theo-political Visions: Post-secular Politics and Messianic Discourse" was published in *Ecclesiology* 10 (Brill, 2014).

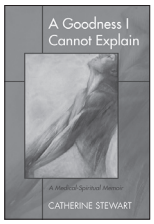
Carmel Pilcher's (Spring 2006, Fall 2006) essay "An Australian Aboriginal Mass" was published in *Worship* (Order of Saint Benedict, Volume 90, March 2016).

Mary Lane Potter's (Writing workshop participant and facilitator) essay "Between Chaos and Light: Calvin, Card Playing, Comic Books, Sex, God, and Dancing" (*Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, Volume 16/1: 78-98) explores what it means to dance and the experience of dancing as a sanctifying act.

Gordon Rixon's (2003/04) article "Locating Hegel's 'Aufhebung' and Tracing Lonergan's 'Sublation'" was published in the *Heythrop Journal*, 57/3 on May 2, 2016. He also published "Engaged Collecting: Culture Transforming Mission" (The Regis Library, University of Toronto: 1 August 2015) and "Beauty, Critical Reflection and Justice" (*Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, 34/1-2: January 30, 2015).

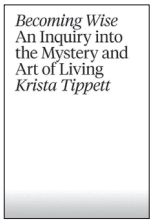
Don Saliers's (1972/73, 1977/78, 1984/85, Fall 2008) essay "Liturgical Desires," was published in *Worship* (Order of Saint Benedict, Volume 90, March 2016).

Susan Sink (2005/06; Summer 2006, 2012) is the author of *H is for Harry* (North Star Press, 2016), a collection of poems on a variety of subjects, including divorce and remarriage, the role of language and literature in life, and the ways in which language contributes to identity.



Cathy Stewart (Summer 2011) writes, "I am not sure my book, *A Goodness I Cannot Explain: A Medical-Spiritual Memoir* (Wipf and Stock, 2015), would have been written if it weren't for the strong encouragement I received during my summer writing workshop! I am so grateful for what the Collegeville Institute does."

Andrew Taylor-Troutman (Summer 2011, 2012) published an essay in the *Christian Century* (April 27, 2016) as part of the Frederick Buechner Narrative Writing Project under the subject "Road."

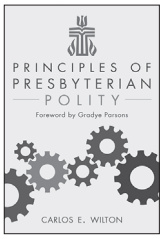


Krista Tippett (1995), Peabody Award-winner broadcaster and National Humanities medalist, published *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living* (Penguin Press, 2016). The companion podcasts can be found at onbeing.org.

František Trstenský's (2013/14) most recent book, *Úvod Do Katolíckych Listov Nového Zákona (An Introduction to the Catholic Epistles of the New Testament)*, written with Danielá Isdrova and Štefan Novotný, was published by Verbum (2015). Written in Trstensky's native Slovak, this book addresses introductory issues such as the authorship, date, genre, canonicity, and historical and cultural background as well as an outline of the theological message of each epistle.

Mary van Balen (2008/09; Summer 2011) has been writing a column called "Grace in the Moment" for the *Catholic Times*, a journal of Catholic life in Ohio, for more than twenty-seven years. Past entries can be accessed at colsdioc.org.

Valerie Weaver-Zercher's (Summer 2005) essay "Words Made Pulp: Why I Destroy Books" was featured in the *Christian Century* (April 28, 2016).



Carlos Wilton's (Summer 2015) latest book, *Principles of Presbyterian Polity*, (Geneva Press, an imprint of Westminster/John Knox Press), was published in February 2016.

Arch Wong's (Short-term scholar, Spring 2014) article, "Considering Reflection from the Student Perspective in Higher Education" was published in the journal *SAGE Open* (March 23, 2016). He worked on this article during his Collegeville Institute residency. The article can be found on sgo.sagepub.com.

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Pilgrimage

by Rachel M. Srubas

The mind is a city that traffics in worry.
Take this map.
That's God's labyrinthine thumbprint.
Enter the whorl nearest you
and follow. At times you will seem so,
but you will never be lost. Your end is salvation.
The question was never whether heaven
will have you.
How will you navigate earth?
Put your mind to the way before you.
All the souls who people your life,
all your concerns will show themselves—
companions and guides, distractions,
worthwhile work.
You will come upon hostels and chapels,
shelters to rest in before pressing on,
places to bow and contemplate the path.

This is your recovery. There's no return.
There's only sun, stalled, it seems, at its ruthless zenith,
administering harsh medicine from heaven.
Taking it may heal you,
though not right away.
You will hate the day before it's over.
You will curse the desert and the wisdom that compelled you
here to hunt for God,
who hides and dawdles in the heat.
Wait. Abide
where you are as you are,
beloved and mortal,
half glorious, half dust.

Rachel M. Srubas is the author of three books, most recently The Girl Got Up: A Cruciform Memoir *(Liturgical Press). Her poetry has appeared in* The Best American Poetry, *the* Christian Century, Give Us This Day *and elsewhere. She has participated in Collegeville Institute's summer workshops,* Writing and the Pastoral Life, Apart and Yet A Part, *and* Women Writing *at Austin Seminary. Rachel is the solo pastor of Mountain Shadows Presbyterian Church (USA) in Tucson, Arizona, where she also serves as a spiritual director.*

In Memoriam

+ Anne E. Patrick – July 2016 – Resident Scholar and Committee Board Member
+ Paul J. Philibert – April 2016 – Resident Scholar
+ Jack B. Rogers – July 2016 – Resident Scholar and Board Member

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Anne E. Patrick, SNJM, 75, died on July 21, 2016. She was born April 5, 1941 in Washington, DC and received her early education from Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary in Silver Spring, MD, entering that community in Rome, NY in 1958. She received her BA in English from Medaille College and her MA in English from the University of Maryland. In 1980, Anne joined the faculty of Carleton College in Northfield, MN, chairing the Department of Religion during 1986-91 and 2000-03, and retired as William H. Laird Professor of Religion and the Liberal Arts in 2009. She authored *Liberating Conscience: Feminist Explorations in Catholic Moral Theology and Conscience* and *Calling: Ethical Reflections on Catholic Women's Church Vocations.* Her writings on religious, ethical, and literary topics have appeared in many other books and periodicals.

She was a former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and a founding vice-president of the International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology. As chair of the Committee on Women in Church and Society of the National Assembly of Women Religious, she helped to plan the 1975 Women's Ordination Conference.

Anne was a Resident Scholar during the 1989-90 academic year, and served on the Collegeville Institute's Admissions Committee from 1990-1998.

Paul J. Philibert, O.P., 79, died on April 14, 2016 in St. Louis, MO. Fr. Paul was the third Prior Provincial of the Province of St. Martin de Porres.

Born in Baltimore in 1936, he entered the Order of Preachers in August of 1956, professed solemn vows four years later, and was ordained to the priesthood of Jesus Christ on June 13, 1963. He received a bachelor's degree in humanities from Providence College in Providence, RI, and advanced degrees in theology from the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, Faculté Catholique de Lyon, France, and Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC.

Paul was the author of several books and numerous articles on topics such as religious life, Christian faith, priestly spirituality, and St. Thomas Aquinas. He served as a Collegeville Institute Resident Scholar during the 1993-94 and 2008-09 academic years.

Jack B. Rogers, 82, died on July 14, 2016. Along with his wife, Sharee, and their sons, Matthew, John Mark, and Toby, he lived at the Collegeville Institute as a Resident Scholar in 1977-78, working on the history of the authority and interpretation of the Bible in the Reformed tradition. Later he participated in the summer consultation, "Confessing Faith in God Today," that resulted in the book, *God on Our Minds*. He served on the Collegeville Institute Board of Directors from 1982-1985.

Jack was a Presbyterian minister, seminary professor emeritus, and author. He taught at Westminster College, PA, Fuller Theological Seminary, and San Francisco Theological Seminary.

He was elected Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 2001. His stature gave special force to *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*, where he relates how the study of the Bible itself turned him 180° to favor LGBT equality.

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