



THE LABYRINTH

St. Luke & St. Stephen Review

Winter 2025: The Spirit of Creation

The Labyrinth Review is a semi-annual publication (primarily electronic) featuring the thinking, writing, and visual arts of St. Luke and St. Stephen members and friends. Richard Rohr says the labyrinth is a powerful spiritual tool reminding us that life is more like a plate of spaghetti than a grid. If you have suggestions for features or would like to contribute, email Marcia Casey at caseymarcia99@gmail.com. If you like this issue, please let us know. Previous issues can be found on both churches' websites under the "Newsletter" tab. Copyright remains with each author or artist.

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The Elephant in the Room

by Dennis Moler

The Spirit of Creation

by Judith + Jones

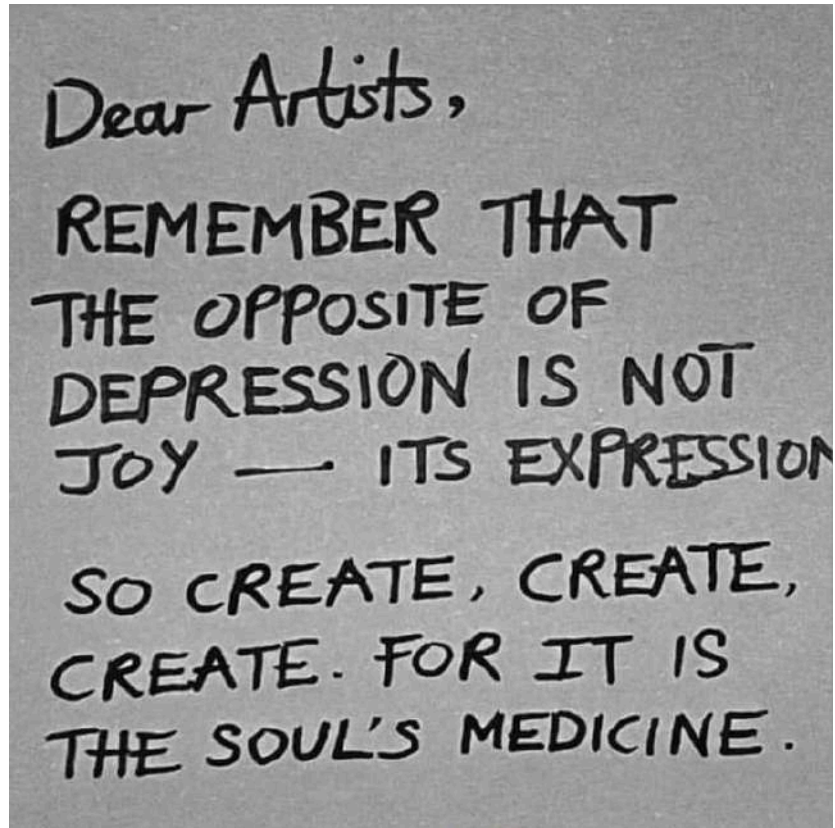
It all begins in chaotic darkness. That's what Genesis 1 tells us. Before there was order, before there was a beautiful, structured, blessed world, everything was formless and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep. But over the chaotic waters the Spirit hovers, and into the encompassing darkness, God speaks light.

Sometimes in our lives it may feel as if everything is chaotic, and darkness is the deepest reality. But our scriptures invite us to see chaos and darkness as the raw materials that God uses to create. When God speaks, out of darkness light shines. Out of chaos, life and beauty spring forth.

In one of his most famous poems, "God's Grandeur," Gerard Manley Hopkins describes a world trampled, smeared, and polluted by human beings. Nevertheless, Hopkins believes in the God described by Psalm 104, who sends forth the divine spirit and renews the face of the earth. In Hopkins' poem even the dreary mess that humans have made of the world is not beyond God's power to heal:

And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

We human beings, our scriptures tell us, are created in God's image. When we take time to be present to God's world, to see the immense glory and the intricate wonder around us, we find ourselves re-centered, renewed. We begin to recognize our own place as God's creatures, called by the Spirit to join in creation. When we give form to the formless, when we shape silence into speech, when we turn incoherent noise into music, we share in God's creative work. Through the poems, art, photos and essays in this issue of the *Labyrinth*, as well as the news about our life in community that follows them, I trust that you will see God's Spirit at work still, brooding over the bent world, speaking in and through us, renewing the face of the earth with light and love.



Facebook Meme *Posted by Cory Wilson 7/28/24*
Contributed by Jeanne St John

Sun Splayed

We shiver with the storm, the seagrass and I
Stunned by the hum of the waves
And the hum of our taut sides
They can't flee
Neither will I
We'll all anchor, we'll coil, we'll bend,
We'll hum with the grey
Until
Far out along the horizon
The grey begins to bleed blue
Distance and depth seeping back into sight
White caps and cloud tips once again shimmer
While we remained huddled, the seagrass and I

"Light is coming," we shiver to each other
My rain-glazed lips hum louder as the light retakes the sea,
shines over the burnt logs and pools of yesterday's water
From top to stalk, the grass blades regain their light
One by one, they glitter before me
I hold on, waiting for the light
Frozen into the dune
My hums almost silenced
By constricted skin and aching lung
Shivers have overtaken,
Eyes drowned and blurred,
Ice speckled thighs locked in their hopeful state.

And then!
The sun,
The glorious sun
Instantly envelopes me
The sun,

The glorious sun
Splays across my spine,
Inviting my deepest shadow to rest,
Inviting my roots to relax,
Inviting my toes to uncurl,
Inviting my song to ring out loud again

The sun,
The glorious sun
Inviting my hands to thaw,
And to once again gather words brought in the wind

by Janey Mae Bevill



Sunset Over My Favorite Beach

by Laura Gill

The Olive Tree

Perhaps it was the warm room
And a night of little sleep
Or the poetry I had been reading
Before an afternoon nap took me unaware

I woke gently looking at the olive tree
As if I had never really seen it before
Growing where sandstone meets the lawn
The interlaced trunks and branches
 reach into the leaves

Gently moving in the wind, dripping from a passing shower,
 Colors in the wet stone were richened
 and grass glistened
Though winter
 the blooms were keeping bees busy
And ripe olives had fallen to the ground feeding the birds

Had I been able to hold that state
 of keen awareness
But just a little longer
 I do not doubt
I would have seen it both as sapling and mature tree
Witnessing the unfolding of creation in the cycle of life

by Michael Rhone



World in a Water Drop

by Laura Gill

At the Confluence of Creativity, Faith, & Meaning by Marcia Casey

I love being one of the editors of *The Labyrinth*: what an honor and what great good fortune to receive the outpouring of creative riches from the wider St. Luke/St. Stephen community that materializes each time we announce we're accepting submissions for a new issue! The beautiful diversity of voices, perspectives, and art forms never ceases to amaze me. My understanding of what we are about in this ongoing communal endeavor has grown and deepened over the five years and now nine incarnations of *The Labyrinth*, but never more so than in the last six months, since I began taking online classes in Theopoetics and Writing, a master's program offered jointly by Bethany Theological Seminary and Earlham School of Religion.

You may never have heard the term "theopoetics" before. It first came into usage in the late 1960's and early 70's, but it has had a resurgence of interest in recent years. Theopoetics stands with theology – both are ways of articulating our human experience and understanding of God. Both words come from the Greek: 'theology' is from *theos* "god" + *logos* "word, speech, statement, discourse;" 'theopoetics' is from *theos* "god" + *poiesis*, the noun form of the verb *poien* "to make, shape, or form." Whereas theology often focuses on a systematic study of God and religious doctrine using logical reasoning, theopoetics most often springs from a creative response to one's personal encounter with and understanding of God. Bethany Seminary's website aptly describes theopoetics as "an inspired, inventive, imaginative and improvisational act of composition" that arises "at the intersection of creativity, faith, and meaning-making." Such responses may take place in any genre – not only poetry, but also in music, the visual arts, architecture, stories, parables, photography, creative non-fiction... even genres not yet invented!

Theopoetics is usually characterized by a few key attributes. First, it has a deep sense of mystery. Irish poet Seamus Heaney said, "Glimmerings are what the soul's composed of," and theopoetic work often uses images and metaphors, colors and harmonies, rather than prosaic explanation to convey its meaning. Its language shies away from hardening its undercurrents of insight into fixed "knowledge." As one student in my class said, "It's a dance between certainty and uncertainty." Its concerns are the soul's concerns, those questions of ultimate meaning, what it is, finally, to be human – it often circles around love, death, beauty, and what's sacred. It is also a living process of discovery, not an arrival at a final answer; it's ongoing and always new. Another fundamental characteristic of theopoetic work is that it's usually rooted in the body. It springs from, and responds to, deeply felt but often

inexplicable longings, allurements, gravitational pulls... art speaks from a sort of internal eros yearning toward and responding to encounters with God; it gropes to find some kind of finite language to name the infinite. Beyond spoken or written language itself, the creative arts also have many aesthetic resources of expression and significance in other dimensions, for example, in the way music moves our whole body-and-soul. Finally, the art of theopoetics is expansive and inclusive – it's an innate human way of encountering, apprehending, expressing, and addressing God that's available to everyone, not just the 'experts.' This creative work is engendered by and done in the Spirit of Creation.

Theopoetics is not new – its intuitive and artful way of seeing and expressing experience and insight has always been part of human being, and these artistic avenues and genres have always been an active part of the church – but in *The Labyrinth* the creative theopoetic orientation takes precedence; to me, it's the hub around which our publication coalesces. It can be seen in the power of the work of our own photographers, essayists, artists, poets, interviewers, as well as in the reports on the work our community engages in day by day, month by month, year by year – all are expressions and incarnations of the body of Christ in us, in the spirit of creation.

On the first day of my first semester in the study of theopoetics, our professor, Scott Holland, said:

We are all in this mystery together. Each is in a unique position in the mystery. Each may have a special imperative. All images of God together express and reveal the mystery of God.

That, I believe, is what we – both contributors and readers – of *The Labyrinth* are doing here.

Hiatus *by Linnea Harper*

The first thing you will forget
is what a poem is. You will lose touch
with the itch for the scratching pen, the
haunted whiteness of paper, the way words
spill themselves onto the glistening page.

You will scarcely notice as you release
your grasp of the complex mechanics
of line breaks, and fill your basket instead
with goods from shelves
to bolster yourself back whole,

waiting your turn at the counter
where people and meanings line up
single-file, fingering coins
in their pockets, eyes fixed
on a world away.

And if, as you make your way home,
birds should rise up from a field as you pass
in a full-flock display of wind-driven dance,

it will only be birds
doing what birds do.

And then, after a certain interval,
perhaps on a day when the sky
first lets down her rains for the winter,
and there is only one blank page
in your hungry book,

an impetuous wind may rise up, ripping
the morning paper from your hands
like a jealous lover. Into that sudden
void may come, familiar and urgent
as coffee to lip,

a singular slant
on a singular world,
and there will be nothing you can do
but reach for the tools at hand
and let the lines spill as they will.



Crows Circling at Dusk

by Kae Bates

Linseed Oil and Chalk

I was afraid
To feel the bounce of the canvas
And once again fall in love with its song

I was afraid
To remember who I am
To remember how it smells to be at home again:
Linseed oil and chalk
Yarrow and honeysuckle
Smoldering match and ginger

I was afraid
To bed here
To shed here
To wake up each day and sweep up yesterday's ghosts
Into a sacred pile:
Tracked sand and chip crumbs
Tumbleweeds of cat hair
Mint leaves and fallen lashes

I was afraid
To feel my body
To hear its creaks and crackles
And truly listen to what it has to say

I was afraid
To witness the ferocious beauty around me
To allow my soul to move and be moved
And to greet each inevitable change of the day

I was afraid
To trust the skill that fills my fingertips
To gaze into the canvas mirror of my spirit
And to let other's gaze within it, too.

From here
Let's allow all truth to be created
And let's allow all things to truly decay

From here
Let's walk, let's knock, let's stumble

Let's breathe out with brave humility
And breathe in with trusting strength
Even if we are afraid.

By Janie Mae Bevill



Good night, God

by Jan Hirsch

The Desire to Love God

Observing without involvement
My mind a river of thoughts
Witness of nature's drama
A million stories taking place

The determination of the ocean
Wave after wave rolling ashore
A flower swaying in the breeze
Petals wide to embrace the sun

Thoughts come unbidden
Most flow past unexamined
Others though break through
And offer insights

The ocean waves and the flower's desire
So different and yet
Both with the same determination
An internal drive to serve their purpose

I observe this drive, this determination as the push
Of unbending intent
Not the destination pulling you
But God's plan of creation opening in you

In the wave and the bloom
There is a beauty in the unfolding
A unity of purpose
Facing the unknowable future

Insight like the wave rolling in, washed over me
Purpose is fulfilled in the journey
Then my prayer changed, became not to love God
But to desire to love God

by Michael Rhone



Many Are Called

by Dennis Moler

Picturing God: Job 38–41

by *Brian Jones*

Imagine creating a set of ten stained-glass windows to describe God. What would you choose to show? The writers of the books of Daniel and Revelation depicted God seated on a fiery throne all dressed in white—the heavenly judge surrounded by a crowd of divine beings. Daniel tells us God has white hair. Would your windows include this image? Is God a hairy thunderer, a stern parent, or a nurturing mother? What if *God* were designing the windows by way of self-description? Wouldn't that be something! What would those windows show? Strangely, wonderfully, the book of Job imagines God doing something very much like this.

We need some context. Most of the book of Job is a conversation between Job and three friends about why Job has lost everything and is tormented by a terrible skin disease. Each of the friends has his own image of God, his own stained-glass window, by which to judge Job's fate. The friends' windows feature God the just judge who assigns fates according to what people deserve. Their point of view is simple: Job's suffering shows that he has sinned and is being punished. Job is convinced he has not sinned, at least not in any way that warrants the kind of suffering he is enduring. His window shows God as a terrifying brute, attacking the innocent without cause, delighting to inflict suffering—a monster God. Job and his friends share the assumption that God is an almighty judge whose role it is to reward and punish. Job's friends attack Job and defend God. Job attacks God and defends himself. And Job pleads, and in the end demands, that God explain why Job is suffering unjustly.

Many writers in the Bible call on God to explain things, but answers from God are few and brief. The wonder of the book of Job is that God answers, and at great length—four chapters! (See Job 38–41.) Nowhere else in the Bible does God speak to someone for four chapters. God's answer is self-defense against Job's accusations. And God does this, not as we might have wished, with a didactic explanation, but with a set of pictures, stained-glass windows, if you will. Readers find it disappointing that God does not focus on Job's particular case since that is what Job had demanded. But as God's answer unfolds, it becomes clear that God is indeed answering Job by offering him new images of God in place of the traditional ones.

God shows Job ten windows. The first window features God measuring and laying the world's foundation as “the morning stars sang together, and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy.” The chaos power called “Sea” bursts forth from the womb as

God stands by to catch it and swaddle it. Sea is a terrible threat to the world, so God, like a good parent, limits its domain so that the world will not be overwhelmed. God is showing Job that even though there is disorder in the world—by design—God has set limits on it. Higher up in the window we see God stretching out and maintaining the whole cosmos, the sun, the starry constellations, the sea and underworld, the forces of rain, hail, ice, and snow. Look and ponder, Job. Can you fit the God you have imagined into this frame?

The next eight windows feature a collection of wild animals. As God presents each scene, God asks, “Do you know...?” The question is, What do you know about me, and how do you know it? It is critical to keep in mind that God shows Job the animals as part of a self-defense. The point of each scene is theology, not zoology. Each window features an animal doing its animal thing, but God is also present in each one, doing God’s thing. And it is God’s thing, God’s role in the world, that Job has called into question.

Window one: God hunts to provide food for the lion and her cubs. Window two: God provides food for the raven and her children. Window three: God assists the mountain goats and deer as they give birth to their young. Window four: God sets free the wild ass and delights in its wildness. Window five: God revels in the freedom of the wild ox. Window six: God contrasts the foolishness of the ostrich with its fleetness. It’s faster than a horse! Window seven: God shows off the mighty horse that paws the ground and charges with fury into the battle. Strangely, no rider sits on this horse, though weapons rattle at its side. Window eight: God describes the vulture and eagle who soar by God’s wisdom and feast on carrion, even “the pierced,” humans killed in battle.

What kind of God has Job seen? It is not the punishing judge, dispenser of just deserts. It is rather the caretaker God who feeds and tends the creatures. God the midwife. God the liberator. God the creator of the crazy ostrich and the fierce war horse. Even God the maker of vultures that feed on death. These windows are a profound challenge to Job’s traditional picture of God. The created world reveals a creator who values creatures for who they are in all their wildness. It is a world designed for creatures both fierce and foolish. God cares for both predator and prey. God helps the deer and mountain goats give birth but also feeds the lion who eats them. The potential for suffering is woven into the world by design. It is not an aberration or flaw. God does not explain why both flourishing and dying are featured in the windows. But God shows both and so claims the goodness of the

world that includes them, the world *as it is*, not as Job (and we) assumed it should be.

Windows nine and ten feature two beasts that were known to ancient people as symbols of chaos and enemies of good order and justice. The first is Behemoth, an uber beast. The second is Leviathan, a dragon-like creature who in ancient near eastern mythology was defeated by the high god in an epic battle. The destruction of Leviathan in the myths was always followed by the creation of the world and establishment of the just rule of the high god. Chaos is defeated so that cosmos can emerge. But the picture in these two windows is not what the Job's culture had taught him to imagine. Behemoth and Leviathan are divine creations, not uncreated beings at war with God. Neither creature attacks God. The mythic battle never happens. In fact, the massive and powerful Behemoth in window nine simply lolls about in the river, unperturbed by the rushing water.

Window ten, Leviathan, is God's concluding exhibit. Again, the creature is in the foreground, but the lesson for Job is in the background where the image of God hovers. God seems more interested in the Leviathan, more personally involved, than with any of the other creatures. God does not merely describe this beast, God brags about it—its strength, its danger, and its beauty. Its beauty! God created Leviathan, the mythic image of chaos, beautiful. Who is this God who created the terrifying chaos monster, the “king over all that are proud,” and who delights in its danger and beauty? The latter part of the description shows Leviathan thrashing about and terrifying the lesser divine beings who then mount an attack on it. And here the old legend shows itself. The attack is fierce; a whole arsenal is deployed:

Though the sword reaches it, it does not avail, nor does the spear, the dart, or the javelin. It counts iron as straw, and bronze as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make it flee; slingstones, for it, are turned to chaff. Clubs are counted as chaff; it laughs at the rattle of javelins.

But the legend does not conclude as it should. Leviathan declines the battle. He laughs and swims away leaving a foamy wake behind.

The Leviathan window is the culmination of God's self-description as self-defense. It is God's paramount illustration of God. Leviathan, the mightiest of all created beings, somehow reveals an essential part of God. But what does the Leviathan

window reveal? What does God intend by it? Indeed, what does God intend by any and all of the windows in this house of wild creatures?

Here's my take on It. First, God celebrates the wild, non-human world. Humans barely appear in God's answer to Job. And this suggests that the human objection to how God's world works is flawed partly because of its human-centered perspective. Second, God loves wildness, weirdness, might, and things dangerous to humans. The created world is not a safe place. It is majestic and beautiful but also dangerous and full of suffering. Third, the windows portray God as hunter-provider (lion, raven, eagle, vulture), midwife to deep chaotic forces (Sea) and to lesser creatures bearing their young (goat and deer), liberator of animals sometimes conscripted by humans (ass and ox), lover of the silly, fast, and furious (ostrich and war horse). God's providence embraces a messy and wonder-filled world. And God is intimately involved in all its messiness. Fourth, the two beasts most representative of chaos (disorder, war, suffering) are God's two final arguments for the inherent wisdom and goodness of the creation. We may well ask, Is chaos somehow good? Have we who question God's providence when disease and disaster strike simply misunderstood the nature of being? God's description focuses on the strength and beauty of Behemoth and Leviathan. Their destructive power is not denied, but both are shown in a passive state, even laughing. I have pondered what this might mean without coming to a clear answer. Maybe these final two windows show Job a God who manages chaos only loosely. Maybe they show that chaos and beauty are somehow interdependent, that beauty is born at the intersection of order and chaos.

In the end, Job admits, "I have indeed spoken about things I didn't understand, wonders beyond my comprehension... I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you." And because of what he now sees, the new windows of his inner sanctuary, Job retracts his case against God and "is comforted concerning dust and ashes" (my translation of a very difficult verse in Hebrew). The world is what it is, majestic in splendor and yet terrifying in its destructive powers. Suffering is inherent in the creation, not imposed. And yet despite all the chaos and suffering, the world rises before us resplendent in beauty, a testimony to the creator's unfathomable creativity, and, as Job came to see, God's intimate care.



Sun Dancing with Water

by Laura Gill

Prologue

*...the sea anemone dreams of something,
filtering the sea water thru its body...*

George Oppen

1 Substance

Vivid, translucent,
the sea floor's sinuous frond
sifts the undulant
tide. Mindless, she fingers
its shifting
substance. She muses —
her sensitive hackles
bristle and hush with each
swerve
in the pull of the waves.
In the hollow of her
muscular trunk, the notion
of hunger, or some unknown
yearning, stirs.
She mulls —

*whisk of fin,
snap of synapse, she clasps*

her prey. In the vessel
of her body
she slowly ingests
this day's catch

*shiver
intuition
flesh*

2 Inkling

In the slow swirl, a ripple
trips his senses — his tentacles sheer
to a singular angle
on the axis of discerning:
he's intent on one
dark inkling — a portent of form
flickering in the phosphorescent
wake of the sea-wind.

3 Stance

Her pedestal, shimmering, sheer
ring of cleaving, clings
unwavering to stone. From this shore
of devotion
she flings her halo
of sentience
headlong. Utterly open,
she's swept on tumult
toward sundering — transfixed
on the abyss
she bears the unfathomable
stance of the saint — absolute
anchor and absolute
abandon.

4 Act

In the heart of profusion, he bows
to his task: sensing
the path of grace. He must
speak
or make
 an immaculate act
and move
with that nuance.
He sets his tentacles
to ground to begin
the tricky, deliberate arc of
a somersault.

5 Turbulence

In her crystal pool, the subtlest
eddies trouble
her limbs – undercurrents,
semblances surge
and fade, Poseidon's trident flashes
and vanishes – she shudders
in wonder
and fear. Sibilant whispers
haunt what
she cannot hear, *Cassandra*
drowned in echo
and tidal
hiss – elusive...
As she strains
to listen, her head
of tentacles
seethes
like snakes.

6 Apogee

Men probe
her glistening, primitive
ganglia, extracting
secrets
from her freakish,
unspeakable form.
They return to their wooden
craft, to tally and define.
In the night, though, rocking,
they relinquish the specific,
and soften
and drift
in the stream of her glimmering
realm: science dissolves
into spiral and curl and
in the deep they see,
healed of fractions, her
whole: O then
the siren
begins to unveil
the psalm of her infinite
name, singing
elegans
magnifica
mirabilis...

7 Center

Fimbria flaring, they bloom,
rapt, their fluent
fringes
suppliant to the sea. The end of each
extremity opens: in the holy
confusion, communion, they come to be
porous
luminous
illuminated
in their brilliant
raiment, matter.

By Marcia Casey

On Color

I am blessed to have a job as a writer that allows me to be creative. I feel I am being creative when I cook, or work with plants. Even cleaning my house is an act of creativity: I am making a loving and comfortable environment. But nothing, NOTHING sparks my creative spark like the mixture of color and fabric.

I don't understand it. But to me, color is better than... ice cream. It's better than the perfect grilled cheese sandwich. Capturing the essence of a spectacular sunset in fabrics that I made or chose to combine feeds me more than food.



Waldport Sunset

The movement that color can create, even with simple straight lines, is miraculous to me.



String Theory



Diamond/s in the Rough

And the shifting shades suggest water, ice, wind, rain, fire, all part of God's beautiful creation.



Something From Nothing



Fidget Spinner



When I play with color, I feel God's creative drive.



No Rain, No Rainbows

I am grateful every day to have this joy in my life.

By Ruth Werner



Angels in the Sky

by Jan Hirsch

Colors of the Wind

by Ursula Bechert

It was a crisp fall day with white cirrus clouds streaked across a brilliant blue sky. The dirt path I walked on meandered through tall, golden grass fields gently swaying under the weight of their seed heads. Stands of vibrantly colored maple and oak intermingled with Douglas fir that stretched up the mountainside. The imaginary murmur of fluttering leaves quietly permeated the air, which smelled of earth and dried vegetation. My hiking boots had traversed these eastern slopes of the coastal mountains in Oregon many times over the past five years. I hoped to get a good view of the awesome snow-capped peaks marking the Cascade range to the east by following the trail up through these foothills. The late summer sun was deceiving, and I had to push my hands into the warmer pockets of my jacket when walking through shadowy parts of the path. It was always relaxing to hike on my own; no agenda, no one else to accommodate and carry on obligatory conversations. Time for my thoughts to come and go as they pleased.

A particularly bright red maple leaf floated unfettered down towards me and landed carefully near my right foot. I stooped to pick it up. It was still pliable with dark, prominent veins running from the main stem to each leaf tip. A true work of art... and each leaf falling around me was uniquely different.

Less than six months ago, this was a bud that emerged as a tiny green leaf, its future still a mystery. During the summer, it unfurled, matured, and gathered energy from the surrounding world in which it was immersed to give life to the whole tree. And now, through death, it had transformed into this—a colorful work of art. Just like people.

I remember seeing photographs of my father as a boy, a young man, and then an adult. People are born, they mature, and then they die. That's "life".

I picked up another leaf, which had lost its pliability. I easily crushed it, crackling, into powder, and a gentle breeze blew it away.

My father was now dead. He died of lung cancer 23 years ago in Arizona. It was not an easy death... chemotherapy, radiation treatment, special diets. Six months later, he was gasping for each laborious breath in an intensive care unit. His immune system couldn't fight off a common respiratory ailment known as Valley

Fever, something many people have and recover from without even knowing. He was drowning... in a desert.

A strong gust of wind brought me back, my vision blurred, and bright leaves fluttered all around me. So many leaves...

The intensive care unit was cold, sterile and bright. This man, my father, fought for life. I wanted to rip my lungs out and hand them to him. He lay there frail, thin, hairless, unconscious, oblivious of the world and life around him. Where was his dignity? A recognition of the value of the life he had led? This artificial environment was not right. We moved him to a comfortable, warmer, and softer surrounding: hospice. There he sank into a peaceful oblivion, no longer struggling for air, no longer forced to fight beyond his abilities. He died three days later, and we all found our peace. Now we could rest.

I started to walk again uphill. The sun had made it halfway across its daily trek through the azure blue sky, hanging in the vast blue nothingness, the cirrus clouds having moved on awhile ago. It was fulfilling its destiny by tracing lines across the sky, around the world in a seamless, continual movement. Everything depended on its warm rays nourishing the Earth below. Lines of light touching plants, animals, the seas... setting in motion seasons, weather patterns, and life itself. Yet how often do we acknowledge all that the sun alone orchestrates in the web of life?

My life and the life of my family revolved around my father and his path towards death. We existed in our own time capsule, somehow separated from the life that surrounded us. We were waiting... waiting for him to die so that we could re-join and continue living in our world. When he died, we were all set free. Other people were sad, expressing sympathy... we felt relieved-- the suffering was over.

I started thinking about the food I'd brought along. Maybe I'd find a good place to sit, take a break, and appreciate a view towards the east. The trail, I remembered, climbed along the edge of this ridge merging with the next with a small waterfall between the two. Beyond that point, steep cliffs eventually underlay the path, and provided a break over the sea of trees below. That was my new goal, and I quickened my pace. I soon heard the waterfall and as the path wound its way through a denser patch of Douglas fir, I felt the temperature drop. The shade, which would have provided a welcome respite from the summer sun, now created a

cool, damp microclimate, and I yearned for the sunshine that was just beyond the waterfall on the next ridge.

I once thought that I was going to die. It was a warm summer day in July 13 years ago. I had just been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. I was 32 years old and had a two-year old son. I needed some time to myself to digest this news, so had hiked to the top of a grass-covered hill in the outskirts of a small town in Wisconsin. It was a beautiful day, clear blue skies, the world abuzz with life all around. But for me, life had temporarily stopped; I existed in a time capsule again. I reached the top of the hill, sat down, and asked myself, "What am I feeling?" Shocked, sad, confused? No... I felt guilt! Why? Because I was going to "abandon" my son, and he was so young!

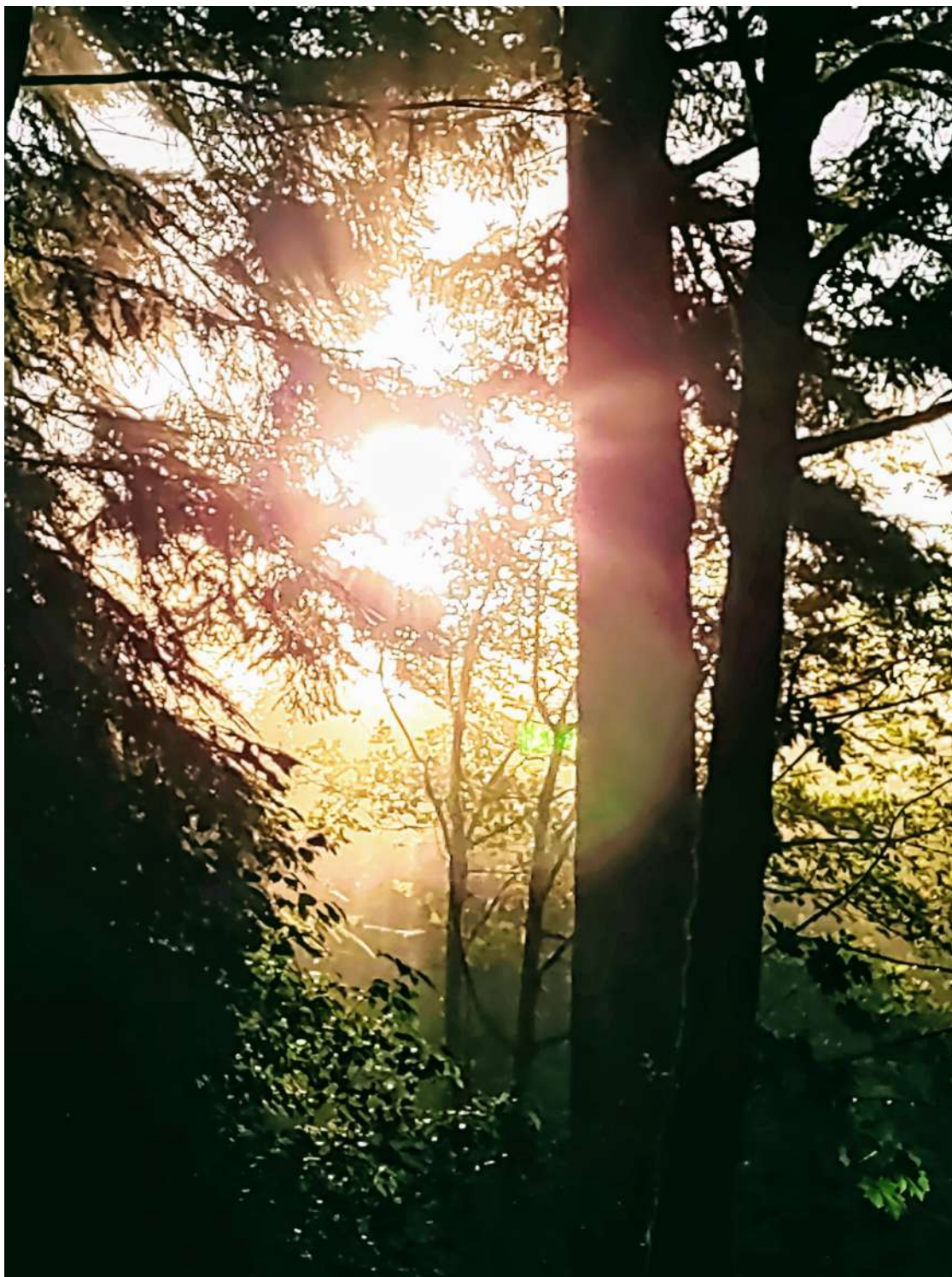
The path ahead was dappled with sunlight, and soon the air was filled with the sweet, pungent aroma of pine needles being warmed against the dark earth. Immediately after setting foot in the light, I could feel the soft rays of the sun reaching through my body. It felt wonderful and comforting.

My son is now almost 15 years old. I am a survivor. Last year, I walked with other survivors in the Cancer Society's Annual Walk. It was a powerful and emotional event. Why do we try so hard to stay alive? For loved ones? Is it how we are designed? Purely instinctual? Do we think that those who refuse radical life-saving interventions are weak? Or does their acceptance just make us angry because we don't share their peace? Are we afraid of that final transition in life? Is fear the ultimate motivation for survival? Fear of the unknown. Fear of being alone.

I could see the trail ahead get rockier and knew that I was getting close to the cliffs, the view, and my lunch. More colorful maple and oak trees burst into view as the Douglas fir retreated, secure in the slightly cooler depths of the mountain. I found a perfect perch amid patches of golden grass that had long since passed their prime. As I nestled between the rocks and plants that occupied this spot, I could see across the entire Valley and the spectacular mountaintops that defined the skies. Peaks were separated by vast, dark green seas of coniferous trees filling the gaps. Solitary monoliths that witnessed the birth of this region and its evolution. Its life and death. I took out a tuna sandwich on rye, and the smell of fish and fresh bread filled the air. The peaks seemed connected yet separate from the world around them.

I remember visiting a monastery several years ago. I had gone for a day retreat and joined a few other people, also interested in taking time for themselves. That afternoon, I found myself wandering through the monastery's gardens. It was a warm summer day, and there were splashes of colorful flowers everywhere. Birds were chattering in the trees, the grass was smelling green, the sun felt warm, and it was peaceful. I sat on a cool concrete bench with a sketchbook in hand. We had been instructed to draw something and then share the significance of our drawing with the group later on. My mind was a blank. I had no idea what to draw. I sat there feeling silly for awhile and inadequate somehow. Eventually, inspiration struck, and I drew a mushroom. One, big, solitary mushroom. Why did I draw a mushroom? Because I am like a human being, the drawing said. Encapsulated in a body is a soul, is a mind. This being stands alone, exists alone, though surrounded by life. Yet even in this aloneness, there exists an invisible connection to all living things. Mushrooms are really just fruits budding from a mycelial mat that lies as a living network under the forest floor. People are like mushrooms.

The wind stirred a little, and leaves of yellow, red, orange and brown swirled In the air. Danced in the air. They were free. But others clung to the tree tenaciously, unwilling to let go. What determines when a leaf falls? I suppose that is for God and his individual leaves to decide. The dancing leaves were now moving on to become part of the earth again and feed the trees from which they came in a new way. To coax the next generation of green buds into life and nurture their growth. Their life wasn't ending; it was simply beginning again. Suddenly a big gust of wind hit the cliff-edge of the ridge I was sitting on, and the air around me was filled with all the colors of the wind. The autumn of one's life can be beautiful. And leaves should fall when they are ready.



Waiting for the Dinosaur

by Laura Gill

*In him was Life, and the Life was the Light of mankind.
The Light shines in the Darkness. John 1:4*

Born of Light

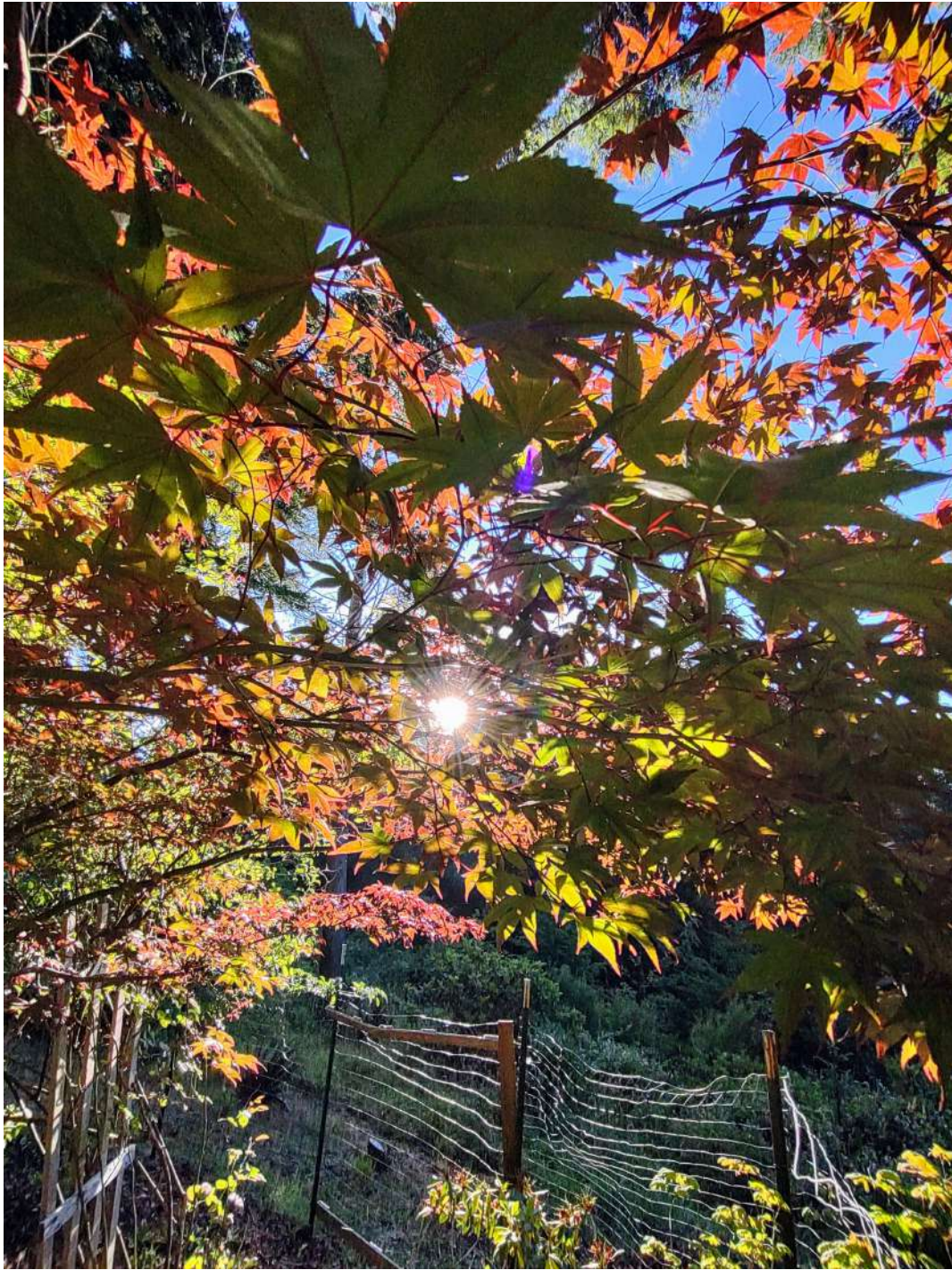
All peoples have a story
An explanation of how they came to be
The need to be assured is strong, as darkness grows
When length of days shortens, it's then,
When children hear the story,
the one I came to believe

And left behind with childhood,
buried in corners of my mind
But the old stories are never forgotten
They resurrect in times of turmoil,
times of darkness
Giving comfort to a troubled soul
Speaking words of light in the long cold night

They tell how everything around us
Was born in the heart of a star
When in their last gasp of life
They erupt in blazing glory
Casting out the seeds of worlds

Our body is born of these seeds
And our soul connects,
with deep roots
To the heart of earth,
to a deeper knowing
And of how,
when I come to fully know my truth,
My True-Self,
like a star my spirit will erupt into the light

by Michael Rhone



Fall Splendor Showing Off

by Laura Gill

God's Greatest Creation

by Jenny Sterling

The beauty our God has created for us is like the music that makes your heart soar. I look out my window and watch the seasons change, knowing the circle of life is happening right before me. Time never slows, but it goes faster and faster. I try to catch the autumn moment by watching the leaves change and fall every chance I get. Something is pulling me away from the stillness and back to what must be done first.

Memories of being a child lying in the green grass of summer in my Grandmother's backyard without care or responsibility. I would see figures of heroes and animals in the clouds, watch birds land on Grandpa's sunflowers, and look at how much Grandma's flowers had grown since we planted them in Spring together.

Running to catch up with my brother I would catch tadpoles with him while he explained the tadpoles would grow to be frogs. We also caught caterpillars and watched them cocoon. Then of course release them to become butterflies.

Everything God has created has a cycle of life, including us. Are we allowed to soar and become who we know we are, or are we driven by others who stifle what makes us truly ourselves?

The creation of life is just the beginning, bringing something to existence the cycle begins. Creation comes first, then we must become whatever we are inside and out, just as the world is ever growing, changing, and renewing. "Life is a journey, not a destination," they say. If something created is stifled or left without nutrients, can it blossom again?

Though we sin and are sinned against, God promises to redeem his creation. We renew our commitments to health, morality, to service, to God, knowing tomorrow is a new day because God planned it to be so from the beginning and sealed his commitment with the death and resurrection of our savior Jesus Christ.

To truly know and believe in God's great creation, the world all around us means to never give up on becoming the creation he meant us to be. We fall, get up, and evolve just as the seasons grow and change the flowers, freeze the flowers, and spring them up again. Never give up on the individual creation of you!



Gandalf the Grey in Winter

by Chris Chandler

On Thinking of Writing My Sister a Letter

For Denise

I can't get started.
The pen picks at the edge of the page.
I chafe under layers of trivia,
dry phrases heaped
around me like tinder.
I search for a spark.
Through the window I watch
naked branches rattle
in the cold spring wind,
look out across the lake.
The day is fading.
Far beyond, somewhere, I think,
your house is glowing
in the dark.
I make a wish in its direction.
Tonight I will take my blankets
and sleep outside,
free myself of the papery shell
of my life, leave it
collapsed and crackly
on the floor.
The cold wind will clear my head.
I will dig a bed in dirt,
lie down, breathe deep,
drink the dark
under a silt of stars.
Our secret language will root
and flower: words
will have substance,
power and form.
With rare eloquence
I will tell you
the message that is
at the heart of things.

By Marcia Casey



Crane Dance Kit *by Denise Casey*

Hero's Journey

by Fran Morse

The boy had hesitated at the car door, after running down the roadside to open it.

"I'm soaked, you know."

"That's what I figured," I said, thinking, *This is exactly what my husband would tell me not to do.*

"I figure we're 92% water anyhow ~ thereabouts ~ so what's another two or three percent? That's the way I think of it," he said as he climbed in out of the rain.

"You're not going to murder me, I presume?"

"I hope not," he grinned.

Not much of a promise, I thought. I hadn't picked up a hitchhiker for about 35 years and wasn't sure why I stopped this time. It wasn't only the Oregon downpour, or even the quaint coziness of the tiny seaside town I was moving into.

"Oh, I recognize you," he said, as he dropped his muddy backpack onto the floor between his feet. "You came into the fish market when I worked there a few months ago."

Oh yes, I remembered with surprising relief, though his long hair now was slicked to his head and running rivulets down his back onto the car seat. "You warned me against the produce at the local market ~ what are you doing now?"

I had the jump on the conversation; he had to answer first.

"Oh, nothing much ~ today I was looking for wild mushrooms ~ oysters ~ I'm trying to grow them."

"On a day like this?! You must be pretty committed!"

"Yeah, I tried to grow Chanterelles, but you need 40 year old Douglas Firs for that ~ kinda hard to come by in a rental ~ even up-river."

There was definite pride of place in that term “up-river.” He was grinning through his scraggling, curling light beard and looking sideways at me. He was teasing me. Also showing off. I went with it.

“So how did you come by this knowledge? Did you grow up on a farm?”

“Yeah, totally self-sufficient farm in Illinois. My parents were the original hippies ~ commune dwellers. We did it all. My father made me butcher a steer when I was twelve years old ~ the whole works! From the bullet to the packaging! I didn’t like it then.... I hated it!”

Then? A brief silence between us.

“But now people call me when they want to butcher something ~ they don’t even know how to begin!”

From my long view of 60 years, office-bound for the last half, I imagined this child-man butchering a steer at the age of initiation. Was that what gave him his simple confidence? In a State where I was hard-put to find an ounce of pretense, this young man had even less.

But he did have his pride.

“Do you go to the Farmers’ Market in town? It’s mostly us. We’re part of the organic gardening group up-river, by choice or by force.”

“By force?” How does that work?” I was going to make a joke about the garden police, but he beat me to it.

“Most of us are too poor to buy chemicals ~ that’s a kind of force.” He was grinning sideways again. Easy charm.

So easily satisfied?, I wondered. We went on talking another twenty minutes or so. We had both grown up on farms, in communal relations of sorts, though mine was somewhat more traditional: a German-Mennonite family of eight brothers on adjoining parcels of ground. I didn’t mention our shift to chemicals and technology. I didn’t think about the multi-millionaire cousins who had given up on the land and become real-estate developers.

“My brother is still on the family farm,” I offered. “Had to take a job in town to support it.”

He nodded. Probably knowing what I had not spoken. We were quiet for another moment.

“Here’s where I get out.”

“What’s your name?”

“Caleb.”

“I’m Sarah.”

I knew he had at least another three miles to the first houses on that road. As I watched his springing gait, the rain fairly bounced off his back. It danced on my windshield and played catch with the wipers.

Too late the quote from Ghandi crossed my mind, “We must become what we want the world to be.” I wished I had remembered it soon enough to tell him.

This is why I moved here, I thought as I turned back onto the highway, In thirty-five years in a desert-bound city, I never met a man walking in the rain, looking for wild mushrooms.



Hope and Awe

By Jan Hirsch

The Bruised Apple

by Jan Hirsch

This time was different. As was my custom I went to Bible Study at St. Luke's where Rev. Susan Church would lead us in a discussion on the readings for the next Sunday. Joining us was a new person. Susan introduced Gloria and said we have a pilgrim with us. Later she asked me if Gloria could spend the night at our house. Of course I said "yes".

Paul and I learned a lot during our time with her. First, I learned that Gloria thought perhaps she should walk from St. Luke's to our home, 10 miles to the south. However, she did rest her feet while riding in the car with me.

We learned from Gloria that a pilgrim is someone who is striving to get closer to Jesus by trying to be more like Christ. Gloria started her journey from somewhere in Idaho and up to Alaska where she mentioned staying with a doctor for a short time. She travelled by foot in all kinds of weather, relying on strength from Jesus, her faith, and the kindness of strangers. Gloria stood 5 feet tall at the most and weighed 95 pounds at the most. She was kind, a joy to be with, helped make dinner, and discussed Thomas Merton with us.

She slept in our downstairs bedroom, choosing to sleep on the floor. In the morning, after breakfast, Paul and I planned to drive to Florence and since Gloria wanted to keep heading south we invited her to join us.

The weather was cold, rainy and windy. She believed strongly that she needed to walk and there was no changing her mind. I wanted to give her some food to take with her and she declined. Since I had a bowl of apples on the counter, I thought maybe she would take an apple and I took out the best one and handed it to her. She put it back and took out a withered, bruised and wrinkled apple. This told me even more about who she was.

The last Image we have of Gloria Is when she was walking by Sea Lion Caves being drenched by the rain and blown about by the wind as we drove past her in the warmth of our car.



The Planets in Their Courses

by Dennis Moler

A Dying Oak in Front of Me Stands

A dying Oak in front of me stands
Once proud, now broken and folding
It shouts in defiance one last charge
Bold gold colors, even though
it's mid summer

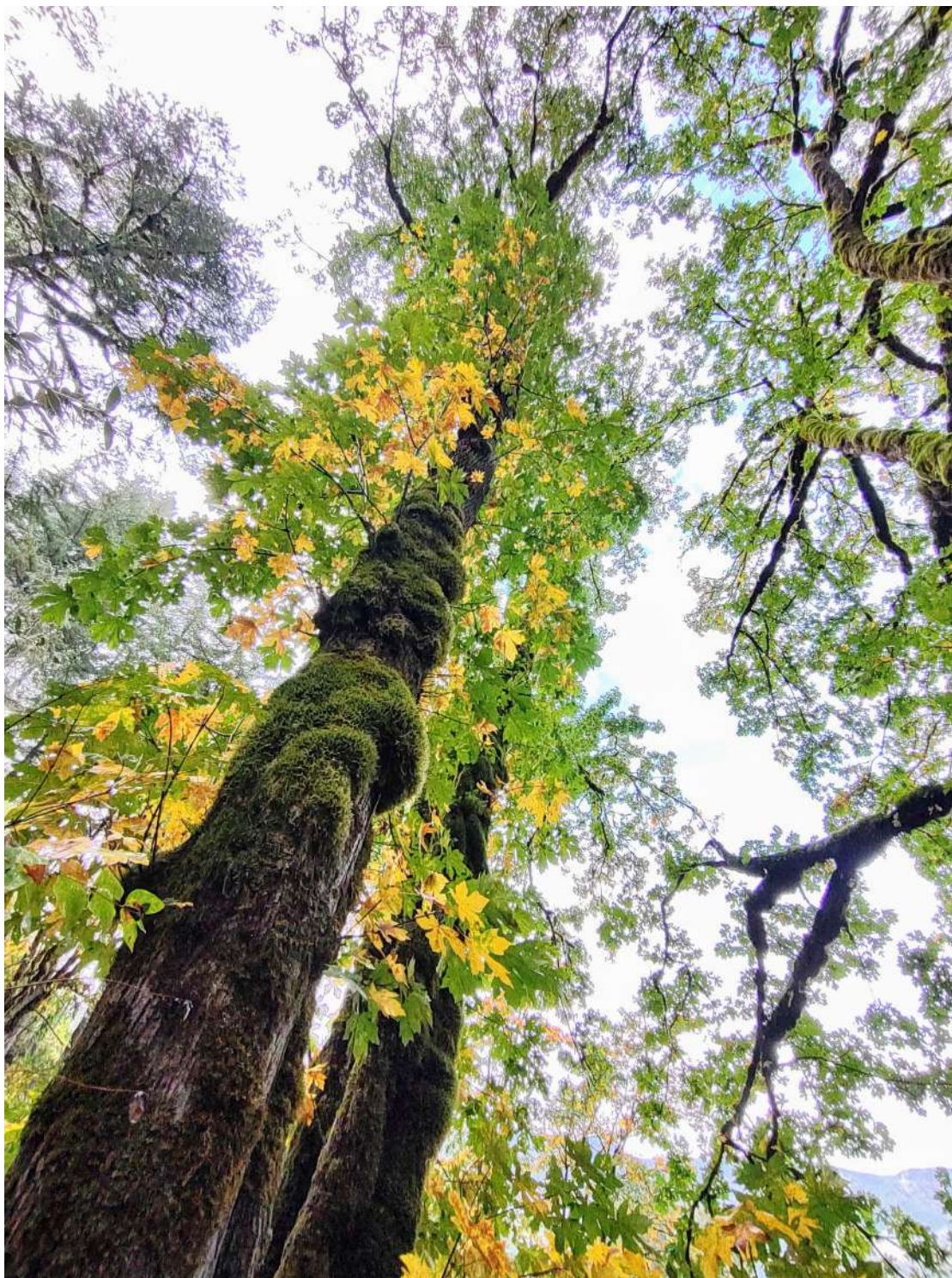
My wife is inside her mother and father's home
We journeyed seventeen hundred miles
to know them better, her better, us better
Her mother shouts in defiance as
she folds her fathers clothes

The sun blinds my eyes intermittently
shining between glossy leaves
I wonder at the tree's dying glory
My eyes glisten, too, even though
I am not yet dying

It's our last day here, I hear my wife
weeping, heaving bold shoulders
I turn to look over mine, one last
time to leave, she is tearing herself
away, the sun is setting

A dying oak in front of me looms
It shudders, I watch as a bold gold leaf
is cast asunder and lands at my feet
We both understand the ground now
We know each other better

by Alex Gust



Mother Nature Reaching for the Sky
by Laura Gill

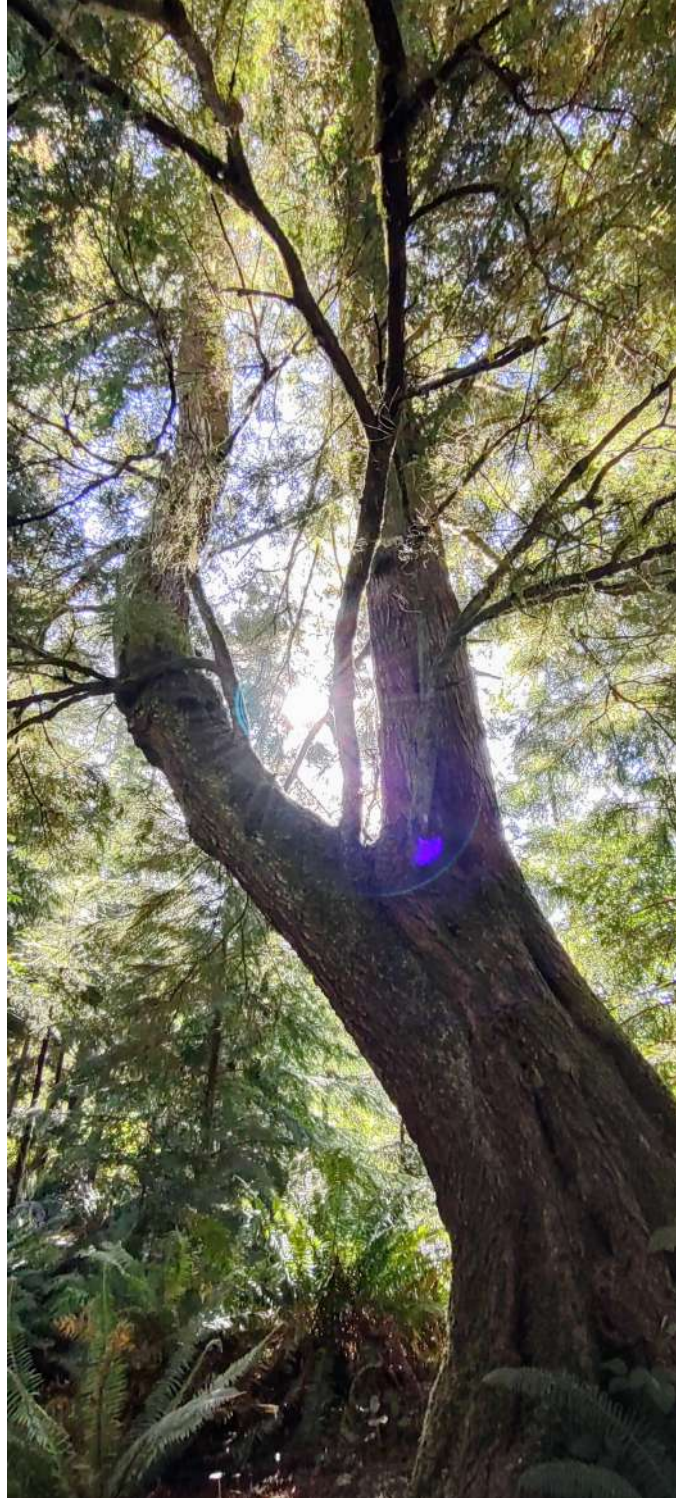
The Turn of Seasons

Outside the window stands an old tree
 The cold winds of winter
 Stripped away its leaves
The multitude of last summer
 Taken one by one
 Until they are no more
Now only its sturdy bones
 Reach up in celebration

Inside the window sits an old man
 The cold winds of time
 Mark the years gone by
A multitude of friends
 Taken one by one
 Only memories left behind

His and the tree's barrenness
 Are waiting for spring
 Holding tight the spirit's promise
To give forth the fruit they've stored
 To celebrate once again
 The joy of creation
The turn of seasons, the cycle of life

by Michael Rhone



Morning Breaks Through Mother Tree
by Laura Gill

Joint St. Luke/St. Stephen Outdoor Eucharist 2024





Stone Soup Suppers Celebrates Twenty Years of Providing Free Weekly Hot Meals!

by Moonbeams (Sherry) Beard

This fall Stone Soup Suppers celebrated its 20th year of serving weekly hot meals to the local community. St. Stephen began the Stone Soup Suppers program in mid-2004 when the church received a grant from the Diocese of Oregon's Fund for the Poor and Hungry. The Vicar's Report for 2004 stated the program "serves those who are hungry (and Lincoln County is one of the hungriest in the state)." The report goes on to mention that the program "has brought together people from different faith communities," referencing the original churches who came together to meet this need. The 2005 Annual Report of the Senior Warden of St. Stephen's notes that, "In its first full year...Stone Soup Suppers has proven that it is fulfilling a need in our community by serving a nutritious meal each Monday night for homeless and hungry individuals." Though the partner churches have changed at times since St. Stephen began hosting the meals in 2004, this all-volunteer program has continued to function without interruption for twenty years, a remarkable achievement.

Today teams from Atonement Lutheran Church in Newport, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Newport, Sacred Heart Parish (Newport/Siletz), and First Presbyterian Church of Newport take turns preparing the meal one week each month, while Central Coast Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Newport prepares the meals on fifth Mondays, four times a year. Stone Soup Coordinators David Sampson and Sherry (Moonbeams) Beard administer the program, and St. Stephen's

Bishop's Advisory Committee oversees the finances and serves as the non-profit's board.

Some volunteers have been with the program from the beginning, while others are more recent. According to Evelyn Brookhyser, since the beginning of Stone Soup the Sacred Heart Parish team members have been involved as homage to St. Ignatia who espoused caring for the poor, as well as to help St. Stephen's have a successful program. Some people see this ministry as a way of seeking and serving Christ in their neighbors. Other folks participate to give back to their community. Others volunteer for the fellowship with their friends. Still others help because food is a love language for them. Volunteer participation ranges from creating the menu to chopping vegetables, cooking, and packaging meals, to handing out meals, to washing the pots and pans when food service is over.



Stone Soup served its first meals on 25 October 2004 and for 20 years has continued to provide hot nutritious meals for the homeless and food insecure almost every Monday night. Each week a volunteer cooking team converges on St. Stephen's tiny kitchen to prepare and serve an average of 150 hot meals. For many years most guests ate their meals in the parish hall on regular plates with regular silverware, though some chose the carry-out option. Hot coffee and tea were available, and local musicians entertained the guests with live music. Covid-19 temporarily put a kibosh on sit-down dining, but after a period of take-away only meals served from the door

of the parish hall door, guests may now choose to eat at the church in the Fellowship Hall. Most families choose to take meals to eat at home while other folks pick up meals for those who are unable to come to the meal site in person.

The program serves a diverse population of all ages, races, and family make-up. While a portion of guests are unhoused, Stone Soup also serves the underemployed, the working poor, senior citizens, veterans, and other folks who have food insecurity. Guests range in age from young children to 90+ years old, and the program receives referrals from the Snap program office, Food Share, and other county social service agencies. K, a retiree, says that the weekly meal at Stone Soup means that she does not run out of food during the last week of the month as there is little left of her Social Security check after paying rent, utilities, insurance, and other necessary bills. Several veterans stop by weekly to socialize and take a hot meal home. R, a young single working mother, depends on Stone Soup for an occasional meal for her family when an unexpected expense wreaks havoc on her budget. Many of our guests are among the employed homeless, such as D, who was unable to afford his apartment rent after a hefty rate increase.

The need for Stone Soup continues to grow. According to a recent report by The Ford family Foundation, Lincoln County ranks sixth in the state for the number of residents who have limited or uncertain access to adequate food. In 2022, Stone Soup served 3,477 meals. That number skyrocketed to 6,245 in 2023. In addition to meals served at St. Stephen's, Stone Soup volunteers provided cooked meals to the Newport Shelter during the 2023/2024 season when food was available after service. The need continues to rise in 2024, with some weeks exceeding two hundred meals. If numbers continue to track, Stone Soup will serve nearly 8,000 meals this year.

Stone Soup is grateful for the support that has made it possible to provide service to the community during the past twenty years. Food Share of Lincoln County has provided thousands of pounds of food to prepare each week. We are grateful to the Oregon Community Foundation for their continued grant support which has sustained the program. Many thanks to the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners who recognized the work Stone Soup does by awarding the program a Nonprofit Social Service Agency Grant this year. we thank our member churches and our volunteers for their dedication to Stone Soup. And, finally, we thank the small team of visionaries who recognized a need and brought Stone Soup to fruition.

Stone Soup Suppers has been on the forefront attempting to meet the growing needs of people in the community who have food insecurity. A staunch contingent of volunteers from the program's five cooperative churches ensure that this amazing legacy of weekly hot meals continues. If you are interested in helping Stone Soup continue to thrive, please email saint.stephens.newport@gmail.com. Our teams serve hot meals from the kitchen at St. Stephen's on Monday evenings from 5-6 p.m. Anyone needing a meal is welcome.



Stone Soup 20th Anniversary Celebration, October 27, 2024

An Interview with Timothy & Jeanie Merrill

by Jackie Wolfe



The first thing I noticed upon entering Timothy and Jeanie Merrill's home were the classic Chinese accents; and books, lots of books. That came as no surprise when I learned they had spent thirteen years in Shanghai. But let's start at the beginning.

Timothy was born in Canada and spent his first ten years there. His father was an evangelical preacher in the Christian & Mission Alliance, which then took them to Chicago, then to Fremont, Nebraska, where he graduated from high school. Timothy was immersed in church during his young life and, after high school, decided to go on to St. Paul Bible College in Minnesota where he got his BA in Biblical Theology. In 1967 he entered what would be a 13-year pastoral ministry with the C&MA. Meanwhile he married and had three children. He was becoming more ecumenical and had a desire to go to seminary, so he moved with his family to Denver to attend the Iliff School of Theology there. He went on to Princeton Theological Seminary, where circumstances led him to stop just short of his PhD... there will be more about that.

Jeanie was raised in the Church of Christ in the Greater Denver area. Her family was very musically inclined with many beautifully trained voices. Jeanie married and

had two children. She attended Metropolitan State University in Denver and taught K-6th Grade, (but not 5th grade). Teaching led her to pursue a Master's degree in Counseling, which turned out to be her true calling.

When Timothy and Jeanie met in 1992, both had been divorced and were single parents for a time. Timothy was the pastor at the United Church of Christ in Wheatridge, Colorado, where Jeanie sang in the choir. They married in 1993. In 1995, while on sabbatical, they spent some time in Istanbul where they met a number of International School teachers. This would influence them later.

In 1996 Timothy left ministry to focus on writing and publishing. A couple years previous he had turned his unfinished Doctoral dissertation into an historical novel, *The Reluctant Crusader*, which takes place in the 11th Century. He went on to write two more historical novels; *The Temporary Typist*, and *The Good that Would*. Timothy also contributed to several publications, edited some, and founded the *HomeTouch* ministry for the home bound.

In 2007, inspired by the International School teachers they had met years ago in Istanbul, Jeanie took a position as a counselor at the Shanghai American School. Timothy accepted a position in Communications at the same school. They attended a very mixed Protestant church (Trinity Church) in Shanghai, which was led by an Episcopal priest. When she left, Timothy was asked to serve as pastor there for a short time.

In 2020, early in the pandemic, Timothy and Jeanie returned to the U.S. where they both worked online. Jeanie, being 15 years younger than Timothy, still wanted to do school counseling work in person. She was blessed by circumstance to end up with a position as counselor at Toledo Elementary School, where she is very happy.

They both are very comfortable with the Episcopal liturgy, which is similar to what they used in China, but Timothy misses the pipe organ, and Jeanie misses the choir. Timothy continues to write for several publications and although Jeanie finds that her work takes most of her energies, she still has time to do needle work, yard work, stay in touch with her grandchildren and join us at St. Luke's, for which we're all thankful.

If you are interested in Timothy's writing, he's an easy find on the internet.



La De Da Parade in Yachats, July 4, 2024

PFLAG and the Welcoming Churches of Lincoln County *by Judith + Jones*

PFLAG is a support organization for members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community and their family members and allies. St. Luke's members Jeanne St. John and her wife Kae Bates played a critical role in the founding of our local chapter. PFLAG underwent an extensive leadership change in 2024. Former chair Amy Shumate, after giving her all to keep the organization going through the pandemic, handed off the reins to an all-new board consisting of co-chairs Stacie Zitnik and Judith +; secretary Robb Davis from Project Bravery; treasurer Eli Walters; and member-at-large Geneva Gano. In December Jeanne St. John joined the board as a second member-at-large, bringing her invaluable experience and knowledge of PFLAG's local history to our team. PFLAG also returned to its previous practice of holding its regular meetings at St. Stephen after a few years of trying out other meeting locations.

In 2024 PFLAG offered a monthly support circle meeting; provided educational activities for family members, allies, and members of the LGBTQ+ community, sponsored the showing of the documentary film "1946: The Mistranslation that

Shifted Culture” at St. Stephen; participated in Yachats, Newport, and Lincoln City events and other social events; and did advocacy work including speaking at a Newport City Council meeting to defend transpeople’s right to have access to bathroom facilities in the Rec Center.

For some of its activities PFLAG partners with The Welcoming Churches of Lincoln County— St. Stephen and St. Luke, Atonement Lutheran in Newport, First Presbyterian in Newport, the Unitarian-Universalists in Newport, Trinity United Methodist Church in Toledo, Yachats Community Presbyterian Church, The Congregational Church of Lincoln City, The Episcopal Parish of St. James/Santiago in Lincoln City, and Unity by the Sea in Lincoln City. In 2024 the Welcoming Churches participated alongside PFLAG in Pride Events; marched with PFLAG in Yachats’ La De Dah Parade (with a new banner!); and, in the wake of the Newport Recreation Center controversy, wrote a letter to the editor, spoke at a Newport City Council Meeting, and organized a Rally for Love outside Newport City Hall.

An Interview with Jenny Sterling & Elena Sandoval

by Jackie Wolfe



Jenny Sterling and Elena Sandoval both had pretty full lives before they met each other. Jenny grew up in Oakland, Oregon, and Globe, Arizona, where she was raised as a Mormon. Elena grew up Catholic on the rough side of Phoenix, Arizona. Both had been married and had children; Jenny had two sons, Elena three daughters. Jenny, a US Navy veteran, served for a few years as a sheriff's deputy in Arizona, where Elena was working as a home health aide and had been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Despite excellent treatment, she had to stop working and qualified for disability.

After their 2017 meeting on a dating site, Jenny and Elena's relationship grew into a deep and abiding love previously unknown to either of them. But both were unhappy with their life circumstances, so Elena suggested they "pray on it." They used the same prayer resource, 24 Hours a Day, as Elena had used to help her achieve sobriety after her girls were born. It surprised them both when they quit smoking! Soon Jenny began applying for federal jobs and was accepted for a position as a driver at the Job Corps in Moses Lake, WA. Over some objections from family, the two uprooted themselves and accepted the blessing that was Moses Lake.

After a year, Jenny applied for a job at Angell Job Corps in Yachats, the place she had dreamed of living since visiting as a child. At Job Corps, she was encouraged to finish the last few credits toward her BA, and soon took a position more suited to her recognized capabilities. She is now in charge of the Career Transitions Department at Angell and also drives part time for Lincoln County Transit. Elena has filled the role of primary home maker and is the first-line caretaker for their German Shepherd/Lab pup with an exuberant temperament, an abundance of energy, and an aspiration to be a lap dog. Elena received her as a gift a year and a half ago. That pup is a LOT of work, and makes it clear, like Peter Pan, that she'd rather not grow up!

Jenny and Elena looked for a faith community that resonated with Jenny's Mormon, and Elena's Catholic upbringing. They attended a fun Mega Church and tried Scientology, but missed having the Bible as a guide, with Christ at the center of their faith. Now they've found their spiritual home at St. Luke's, and Jenny was recently baptized – right in their own backyard.

Housing Projects

by Dennis White and Judith + Jones

Over the past three years, a small group of St. Stephen's members and Judith + have been working on issues related to homelessness and affordable housing. Early in this process we organized ourselves as St. Stephen's Housing Committee and agreed to meet at least monthly via Zoom. Committee members are Dennis White, chair; Judith +; Moonbeams Beard; Melodie + Kimball; Richard Quin; and Martha + Wallace.

Jefferson House:

St. Stephen's work on housing began with an exploration of what to do with Jefferson House (formerly the parsonage on St. Stephen's property) that might be more aligned with our mission. Our involvement has mushroomed into other ways that the parish could serve the community in this area. We initially thought that the Jefferson House property and adjacent city property could be transformed into a tiny house community. This idea was abandoned after we learned that we are located in an Urban Renewal area that is destined for an upgrade of the entire block and possible re-routing of northbound 101 to 9th street. We are still intent on exploring alternative uses for the Jefferson House space, but a mission-related project will have to wait until the city of Newport's plans are further developed. At the moment, we are actively involved in the city's planning process. Judith + serves on the city committee that is making recommendations about the redevelopment of the area, and Dennis White serves as her substitute when she is unable to attend.

It is important to point out that we have been in touch with Bishop Akiyama or her designee every step of the way. Both St. Stephen Church and Jefferson House are Diocesan property, and significant changes to structure or land ownership require the approval of the Bishop and the Diocesan Board of Trustees.

ALSI Resort:

After we discovered that the Jefferson House lot's size is inadequate for our initial plan, we shifted our focus to looking for vacant land that might serve as a location for a tiny home village elsewhere in the city. A study conducted by the city has revealed that there is very little available space in Newport to satisfy the need for housing of any sort.

Our group became aware of the availability of the ALSI Resort in Waldport. The facility is for sale and has 81 rooms. The facility has been very well maintained and has several features that would make it desirable for conversion to an affordable

housing facility, including a commercial kitchen and large meeting and dining rooms. The Lincoln County Housing Authority was ready to help put together a purchase agreement, but the property is in the inundation zone for a tsunami, which rules out receiving any public funds. Nevertheless, our interest in this property has led to a positive development: the Housing Authority is interested in exploring ways to partner with St. Stephen's and with Northwest Coastal Housing (a local non-profit housing developer) to purchase and build or redevelop a property for use as affordable housing. We continue to look for an appropriate property and discussed several possibilities at our most recent housing committee meeting.

Affordable Housing Partnership:

Lincoln County is blessed with a well-organized and dedicated network of services and individuals focused on improving the circumstances of individuals challenged by the stresses of poverty, homelessness, and poor physical and mental health. These service providers have been organized by Lola Jones of Samaritan House as the Affordable Housing Partnership. Group members meet monthly to keep each other informed about their activities and to collaborate on overlapping projects, including a new Housing Management Information System for making inter-agency service referrals and coordinating care.

Winter Shelter:

Last year and this year St. Stephen's played a limited role in the operation of the Newport winter shelter. We were the only shelter location for the first two weeks that it was open. The permanent shelter location in Newport is now on 7th street, two blocks from the church, but because of the slow pace of necessary remodels there, the shelter was located for many months both last winter and this winter at First Presbyterian Church. Due to the small size of our building, after those first two weeks St. Stephen's has primarily served as an overflow location. We also donate leftover meals from the Stone Soup program. The shelter will soon be fully operational with a kitchen, showers, and other accommodations. In addition to the basic work of providing a safe place to sleep, the shelter is also offering housing navigation, medical care (especially for wounds on the feet), and connection with addiction treatment and mental health care. The Newport shelter and the new shelter in Lincoln City are both county facilities.

100 Day Challenge:

At the beginning of 2024 Karen Rockwell, the CEO of the Housing Authority of Lincoln County, organized a 100 Day Challenge which established a goal of housing 200 people in Lincoln County in 100 days. The project brought together

representatives from government agencies, local non-profits, and faith-based communities that are working on housing and housing-related issues. Judith + served as a faith community representative. Our 100 Day Challenge team greatly exceeded our goal by:

- Moving 161 people into permanent housing as defined by HUD;
- Providing emergency shelter for 538 people; and
- Moving 460 people into transformational/transitional housing such as Nate's Place.

That's a total of 1,159 people housed in 100 days! What could provide better testimony of the dedication, coordination, and effectiveness of individuals and services in our county?

LCHAB Equity and Inclusion Committee:

The 100 Day Challenge was intended not as a single, one-time project, but as a way to kickstart long-term effective collaboration around housing-related issues in Lincoln County. One of the ongoing outcomes of the Challenge's work was the formation of an Equity and Inclusion committee that reports to the Lincoln County Homeless Advisory Board. Judith + was invited to serve on this committee, which meets monthly. At present the committee is focusing on three projects: 1) a Gender Inclusivity and Equity Workshop for property managers and housing-related agencies to improve access to housing and promote just, equitable, and inclusive treatment of trans and non-binary people. The workshop will include education about practical issues such as the language used in forms and policies as well as more difficult conversations about exclusive language and attitudes, harmful practices, and the damaging effect they have on members of the trans and non-binary community. 2) Writing a grant for funds to translate and produce housing-related forms and signs in Spanish and to create housing-related educational videos in Mam, the tribal language that many local recent immigrants from Guatemala speak; and 3) Organizing a resource fair in South Lincoln County, which is a historically underserved part of the county, where many local residents find it difficult to access the information and resources and support that they need to find and remain in safe, adequate housing. The Resource Fair is now tentatively scheduled for March 4.

Housing Grants:

Over the course of the last year St. Stephen and St. Luke have been awarded approximately \$124,000 in grants by the State of Oregon, through the Lincoln County Housing Authority.

House Bill 5019 Grant for Rapid Rehousing. In November of 2023 St. Stephen was awarded \$23,980 to be used to help unhoused and vulnerable people. We received the first funds in late January, 2024 and have now nearly exhausted this grant. With the funds we were able to help 15 individuals and family groups (a total of 35 people) to move into or keep their housing.

Youth Emergency Housing Assistance (YEHA). St. Stephen's was awarded \$30,000 and St. Luke's was awarded \$50,000. These grants are for families with K-12 children and for unaccompanied minors K-12. The grants will be used to provide direct financial assistance to prevent families from being evicted from their existing housing and to help unhoused families move into housing by paying for expenses such as security deposits, first month's rent, and/or moving costs. St. Stephen's received the first advance of \$10,000 in December 2024. We have spent the entirety of that first advance. We hope to receive a second advance for St. Stephen and the first advance of money for St. Luke's grant within the next week. With the first round of funding to St. Stephen's we have already prevented 6 families with school-aged children from losing their housing.

Oregon Rehousing Initiative (ORI): This grant of \$20,000 to St. Stephen's is basically an extension of the HB 5019 Grant. Our portion of the grant will be used to help unhoused people move into housing. We expect to receive the first advance on these funds in April.

Our work with the housing grants includes more than handing out money. We meet with people and talk with them about their situation and their needs so that we have a better understanding of the big picture. We also participate in case conferencing with other grant recipients so that we can collaborate on connecting grant recipients with resources and social services that will help them to become stably housed.

New Case Worker

Elizabeth Pflibsen-Jones is now assisting Judith + with the housing grants as a volunteer Case Worker. We are looking for grant funds to make this a paid position, since it involves a significant amount of work. Elizabeth spent the last week training with Judith +, shadowing her at case conferencing and the Point in Time Count of unhoused people, participating in an interview with a family that needed assistance, being trained on how to use the HMIS software that we use for documentation, and helping with organization of paperwork and documentation of expenditures. Judith

+ greatly enjoys working with her and is delighted to have her help with this very time-consuming work.

Elizabeth is Judith's daughter-in-law, married to Sami. She double-majored in neuroscience and German in college and has experience working in Looking Glass' residential treatment facility for youth in Eugene. Some of you know her from our racism conversations and from St. Luke's Women's Bible Study (or may remember her as the worm attacking the bush in the Jonah skit at the Easter Vigil!)

The housing grants have already allowed us to make a tremendous difference in the lives of some of our most vulnerable neighbors. We look forward to continuing this work in the coming year.

An Interview with Stephen Dietrich & Ursula Bechert

by Jackie Wolfe



Stephen Dietrich and Ursula Bechert's first meeting makes several great stories. Here's one short version. In 2003, one of Stephen's parishioners invited him for dinner. The husband also invited Ursula, whom he knew from work and hoped would add some variety to their conversations. Ursula's boyfriend at the time had been killed in a plane accident that day, but she decided to go to the dinner anyway! The first time Stephen went to her house, she was preparing for a trip to Africa, all the goods laid out for packing, including two rifle cases (for darts, it turns out). He asked if he could help, and she said she had to pick up some elephant dung from the university, and could he come along and ensure she didn't get locked in the freezer. They married in 2005.

Stephen was born in San Francisco, where his father was pastor of a Presbyterian Church that became a "Black, White and hippie" church in the 1960's giving him early exposure to talk of social justice. When his father was posted to Philadelphia in 1969, Stephen was enrolled in the Friends School system and received Quaker religious education, as well as serious college prep. He graduated from high school in Madison, Wisconsin, then got his BS at Carroll University, in Waukesha, Wisconsin. The location allowed him to spend time with his grandfather who was into "Harvesting the Wild," and added to his appreciation of being present in

nature. In Stephen's senior year he began working in the *Nuclear Freeze* movement, involving himself in social justice work for about five years. He spent time with a Hindu group but felt moved to a Christo-centered perspective. That deeply felt sense catapulted him to attend seminary. At San Francisco Theological Seminary, he was drawn into contemplative prayer and experienced a socio-political interpretation of scripture. That was also where he met his first wife, who was subsequently diagnosed with aplastic anemia and died 11 years after they were married.

Stephen accepted a post as pastor at First Presbyterian in San Jose. He served there for 11 years and, when his wife died, he moved to Corvallis, Oregon, to be an associate pastor at First Presbyterian Church there. Some of the work he did there, informed by processing his own grief, led him to hospital chaplaincy. He did his Clinical Pastoral Education at Sacred Heart, Eugene, then spent a year in residency, and 5 years as hospice chaplain. He served as a hospital chaplain for about 15 years. He is currently the Spiritual Care Manager of the Oregon network of PeaceHealth.

Ursula was born in South Porcupine, Ontario, Canada. (No, really!) Her father's work as a self-taught mining engineer then took the family to Western Canada, to Arizona where she started high school, then to Utah, where she graduated. She was first in her family to go to college and got her BS in biological veterinary science from Utah State University. She went back to Arizona to help her mother out after her father died in 1984 and then applied to veterinary school. She was accepted into the program at Oregon State University (OSU), which at that time was completed in partnership with Washington State University. After working in private practice for several years, she earned a PhD in reproductive endocrinology working with African elephants at Wildlife Safari. She then took a position at OSU, teaching zoo and wildlife veterinary medicine to senior veterinary students. She made several research trips to Africa, which included some with her son, Sean Wolf, from a previous marriage.

In 2012, Ursula was offered a position at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Arts and Sciences. In Philadelphia, Stephen served as a chaplain for the Holy Redeemer Health System. Both had fond memories of Oregon and dreamed of eventually returning "home".

In 2021, Stephen accepted the position of Spiritual Care Manager of the Oregon network of PeaceHealth. Ursula stayed in Pennsylvania to sell their home there

before moving to Eugene, and then continued her old job by working remotely. At the end of 2023, she resigned from that job and officially retired.

Now Ursula is working on a start-up business developing birth control vaccines for wildlife (SpayVac for Wildlife, Inc.). She also volunteers for the Oregon Sierra Club addressing forestry management and herbicide/water quality issues.

Besides being a lot of work, Stephen's job entails commutes to Eugene, where he stays all week, and drives home on weekends. He is getting curious about what it might feel like not going to work and retiring to pursue other interests.

Herk & Jo

by Jackie Wolfe

In early October Jo Martin mentioned to me that she had a hankering to go paddling, but in a tandem kayak. It had been a while since her last foray, which was with her son during a trip to Alaska, and she wanted to feel secure. I called Herk Martens, knowing he loves sharing his boats and his expertise with them. He was game. In mid-October we launched from Herk's dock on the Alsea River, paddled down into Lint Slough and back on a two-hour trip. Besides paddling, both Jo and Herk enjoyed telling and listening to stories. A perfect afternoon!





The Rock Garden

by Dennis Moler

FAREWELLS

St. Stephen and St. Luke have lost some long-time and well-loved members on this earthly plane, for whom we pray that they are now “resting in peace.” We would like to acknowledge their loss, their service, and their connection to St. Stephen and St. Luke, where they continue to be part of our very extended family. An old Jewish tradition says that people die twice—once when the body dies and again when no one speaks their name. It’s good to speak their names and remember their beings.

Sandi Archer



Sandra (Sandi) Kay Archer, 78, passed away at her home in the Independence Airpark on Sunday Nov. 3, 2024, after a long struggle with dementia with her loving husband Sam and her caregivers by her side.

Sandi was preceded in death by her father, Ira Fox; loving mother Alma B. Semin Fox; brothers LeRoy and Gaylord Fox; and sister Deloris Fox Johnson.

She is survived by her husband Samuel E. Archer; stepdaughters Amy Archer and Cindy Pittman; grandsons Ian Carney, and Chris and Andy Pittman; niece Debby Bruner; nephews Kile Hendrickson, Joe and Lyle Bruner; and countless other relatives and friends.

Born in Minot, North Dakota, on July 5, 1946, Sandi led a full life in many cities and states. After enjoying her early years in Minot through the eighth grade, she was happy to move with her mother to Spokane, Washington, to be near her sister Deloris.

She graduated from West Valley High School where she sang in the choir and played the saxophone in the band. After graduating from high school, they moved

to the Seattle area, where she attended Pacific Lutheran University and was proud to be a lifelong Lute. Shortly thereafter, she became one of the earliest registered respiratory therapists in the U.S. and set up Tacoma General Hospital's first respiratory department.

She married Sam on Oct. 18, 1975, at Calvary Lutheran Church in Federal Way, Washington, with her elder sister Deloris as maid of honor and Sam's cousin Bob Richardson as best man. She and Sam lived in Hoquiam, Washington, for a short time, then moved to Kelso where they lived for almost 30 years. Sandi graduated from the nursing program at lower Columbia College and was an RN for nearly 30 years in the NICU at St. John Hospital.

Sandi loved to fly airplanes. She was a private pilot with a seaplane rating and even built an airplane with Sam. They moved to Independence Airpark to enjoy their passion for flight to the fullest.





Timothy Scott Kelly

2 August 1953 – 12 February 2024

Tim was born in Salem, Oregon, the youngest of four children born to Janet and George Kelly. He was preceded in death by his parents and his eldest brother, George Steven (Stevie) who died in 1956. He is survived by his brother John Michael (Mike) Kelly of Warrenton OR; his sister Gail Kelly Westin (Mark) of Seabeck, WA; nephew Daniel Westin of Bremerton WA; niece Erika Morelli and great-nieces Mackenzie, Scarlet, Juliet and Lorelei of Seabeck WA. Also, a large group of cousins from Seattle, Vancouver and from California and Michigan. We are thankful that many of them, as well as friends, neighbors and co-workers, could join us for his memorial service.

Tim was a gifted artist; and a perfectionist in everything he did. He brought joy and laughter to every family gathering. Our “Timmy” will be remembered for the sparkle in his eyes and his adorable dimple when he smiled.



Deanne Bishop

Deanne Adele Bishop leapt into the waiting arms of her loving brothers, Richard and Donald (known then as Dick and Don), and adoring parents, Elizabeth (aka Dixie) and Draper, on 26 October 1949. Cary, Illinois would never be the same.

As a child, Dee took to the piano like she took to so many things throughout her life: with tenacity, brio, and charm. More musical accomplishments were to follow, including knowing her way around the guitar, the ukulele, and of course, the stage. Beginning around 1980, Dee was deeply involved in quartet singing communities, including the Sweet Adelines, where she met friends who became family.

Also central to her story is her time at Cornell College, in Iowa. She joined her father, uncles, and brother Don as an alum, treasuring her time there. An English Literature major, her favorite class was American Literature and, yes, she sang in the a cappella choir. She recently returned for her class's 50th anniversary, delighted to savor her beloved campus and reconnect with old friends.

Music, though key to Dee's life, was not her only passion. Books, too, accompanied her everywhere. Always an avid reader, she began her professional life surrounded by those she loved, managing Kiebel's bookstore for several years.

Surprising no one, Deanne wasn't done learning: she went on to study computer science and landed an early job at Apple, where she spent a decade as a systems analyst, business analyst, and then information architect. Being a woman pioneer in a male-dominated field wasn't enough of a challenge for Deanne: while at Apple, she earned her MBA and then her MA in Clinical Psychology.

1997 was a pivotal year for Deanne: she left Apple, bought her first home, and lost several notable loved ones, including her cat Munchkin.

The Oregon coast proved a fine place to transition into her private psychotherapy practice as well as to put down new roots. Deanne loved the blustery weather, the rain, and the waves as well as the numerous groups of which she was an active part, both in person and online: books (naturally), meditation, spirituality, Enneagram, nutrition, and more that fueled her mind and heart. She was a long-time participant in St. Luke's Enneagram classes as well as St. Stephen's Wednesday religion discussion group. Dee was also an avid sports fan, who supported the Seattle Seahawks and Golden State Warriors and shared her passion with fellow fans around the country.

In the spring of 2018, Deanne hung up her psychologist cap to focus first on caring for her mother and then, later, on enjoying retirement, which included RV ownership and travel. Trips were joyful bounds from one friend's home to another: Deanne also delighted in the camaraderie of campgrounds and her women's RV club.

Deanne died suddenly in her home, with friends, on January 8, 2024. She is survived by her brother Richard Bishop (Jane), his children Katherine Bishop (Scott), Morgan Varihue (Clarissa), and David Bishop; her nephews Matthew Bishop and Jonathan Bishop; a bevy of dear cousins, including Bonnie Richman (David) and Laura Simmons; beloved great-nieces and nephews Maxine, Edwin, Evy, and Elliot; and a host of friends and interlocutors. She was preceded in death by her parents, her brother Don, her sister-in-law Marsha, and many friends. Deanne will be deeply missed.



Beauty All Around Us

by Jan Hirsch