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LUMUNOS

SHINE A LIGHT ON YOUR CALLING

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Doug Wysocky-Johnson

Just yesterday I ran into my friend Bill while walking the dog at the park. Bill has a lot going on right now, including the common stress trifecta of those in the “sandwich generation” – 1) kids still at home 2) aging parents in poor health and 3) a health issue of his own.

I could tell Bill needed a listening ear; I gave him both of mine for about 20 minutes. *Sort of, anyway.* I say ‘sort of’ because in thinking about this conversation later, I came up with this rough estimate of where my mind was at while I did my best to give him my full attention:

- 52 % Listening carefully with empathy and compassion;
- 27% Thinking about what I might say that could be helpful to Bill;
- 14% Thinking about what I know about my past experiences with Bill;
- 11% Thinking about how I would handle it if I were in Bill’s shoes;
- 9% Thinking about what a good person I am for listening so compassionately;
- 7% Thinking about that other person that just walked by...

While some of you skipped right by it, the more mathematically inclined among you noticed that the numbers add up to more than 100%. On the outside I looked like I was giving this person my full attention – and that was my goal. However, in my head, I was over-thinking and under-listening. It happens more often than I would like to admit.

Listening in the Dark

Listening is Not Easy

I don’t know if it is ever possible to give someone my full attention, but I am confident I could do better than 52%. It is hard, isn’t it? There are all the noises and distractions **outside** of us, plus the noise **inside** our own heads. It can get pretty loud out there and in here.

At some deeper level, I suspect it also has something to do with the fact that listening requires that I forget myself for the moment and truly focus on another. It necessitates an act of emptying – of my opinions, my theories about life, and even my desire to help you. That takes a lot of effort. No matter how hard I try, I find myself often slipping back into patterns of listening just long enough to form a response.

Illuminators

We have focused our programming on the theme of Courageous Listening this year. One of the benefits of this focus has been that I have become more aware of when another is listening well to me. When I am in the company of one who practices this level of listening, I know how precious and healing it is. In a recent column in the New York Times, David Brooks described these kind of people as “Illuminators”:

Illuminators are a joy to be around. A biographer of the novelist E.M. Forster wrote, “To speak with him was to be seduced by an inverse charisma, a sense of being listened to with such intensity that you had to be your most honest, sharpest, and best self.” Imagine how good it would be to offer people that kind of hospitality. (NYTimes, 10/20/23)

Illuminators—what a great name for those who listen well!

Courageous Listening as We Prepare for...“The Holidays”

It gets louder this time of year, doesn’t it? It isn’t just the holiday carols at the mall. I find that the noise in my head goes up too, as I bounce around the various

expectations, tasks, and moods this season brings upon me. Joy, connection, busyness, grief, and nostalgia are all talking at once. Whomever has their fingers on the volume dial of life just turned it up to 11.

This is why I cling to our faith traditions and other invitations from spiritual seekers to slow down. To light candles. To pause. And to listen. To be in the company of, and to be, an “Illuminator.”

That may be why I was drawn to the image on the cover of our newsletter this month. This season of winter solstice is the darkest time of the year. At times it is hard to wait in the quiet and the dark; I want to move quickly toward the light and noise that feels familiar and comfortable. But the invitation of this season is to quiet ourselves and listen. Trusting that even in the darkness there is more happening than meets the eye. The Light is coming...but not yet. Now is the time to listen.

In every experience of true listening, especially to God, but also to another person, there is a mysterious moment in which the one who listens steps out from a fortress of self concern and dwells silently in the truth of the one who speaks. This is a moment of great risk and great courage, for it ushers us into a different way of being in the world.

(John Mogagab, Weavings, 2004)

PS: This image has another meaning for our Lumunos community as well. As we look toward the doorway of 2024, we see a bright future. We will be welcoming a new Executive Director as I move into a program focused role. And we will be introducing a new initiative called Lumunos Brighter. More to come, but I just wanted you to know that we can’t wait to open the door to 2024.

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Willingness to Change

By *Dee Rambeau*

When things are working well—or at least appearing to work to all those watching—why change? I’m convinced by what I’ve witnessed in my own life and recovery, and in the lives of countless others I’ve witnessed, that change only occurs when the pain of the current situation outweighs the fear and uncertainty of what it looks like after the change is made. It tips over.

I was driving by a park the other day and I saw what looked like a kid’s birthday party. My guess would be 7- or 8-year-olds. Moms running around herding the kids to and fro. Lots of laughter. I saw at least one kid pitching a gigantic crying fit. There was something lumbering around that looked like a human in a donkey costume. Pin the tail? Anyway, there were several large bunches of balloons tied off at various places—and a handful of flyaways that were drifting skyward. All of this happened visually in the moments I was sitting at a traffic light.

Six or seven balloons of various colors had escaped—drifting upward and away from the crowded chaos on the ground—strings dangling uselessly like a broken rudder beneath them—not necessarily seeking a path of any kind but finding one nonetheless. They might end up in a tree. Or get tangled in a power line. A teenager with a BB gun could take an interest. Perhaps they’d find a backyard or a rooftop or another county. A curious bird might take them out. Or it remained a possibility

that they’d just run out of helium and elevation eventually and skitter around on a roadway until a Michelin ran them flat.

They were free. Their future was undetermined. They had broken from their restraints and were drifting with the wind.

Have there been times in your life when you felt like that balloon? Were you the balloon tied to the park bench—all pumped up and nowhere to go? Or were you feeling more like the airborne balloon—drifting aimlessly but free of the problems and pettiness on the ground?

Control

What came to mind later was the concept of control. I’d witnessed a microcosm of life in that one moment in the park. Moms were trying to control their kids. Trying to control their own emotional levels in the red Solo cups they clenched tightly. Kids were trying to control the toys—the cupcakes—the



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donkey—each other. Strings were controlling the balloons. Until they weren't.

Whatever that moment is—and it's different for everyone—when your lack of control has put you in an untenable or painful situation—that's when willingness to change creeps in. It can be about substance use disorder. Or about depression. This can be about a marriage. It can be about a job or career. It can be simply about life. Willingness to change comes when it simply isn't working anymore and you're desperate to find another way.

Desperate. Sick and tired of being sick and tired. Beat up. At the end of your rope. No other choice. Define it however you want: Willingness is about surrendering. My way isn't working anymore and I'm miserable.

Surrender?

Oh that word surrender. What person was ever taught anything about surrender? I certainly wasn't. My father's generation instilled language, coaching, and training that was exactly the opposite of surrender. And that's what they learned. They were children of the Great Depression and of WWII. Giving up meant death.

You fight.

You try harder.

You never quit.

Winston Churchill, in the second of three famous speeches delivered in May and June 1940 to the British Parliament and House of Commons:

"We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

Surrender isn't bred into the lexicon of most of us. It is a learned behavior, mostly forced upon us by defeat or failure. But in today's more culturally complex society, there can be confusing messaging, and conflicting representations of what a normal or happy life should be. But in that confusion, there is also an opportunity to discuss these issues in a more open and honest way. Happiness certainly isn't guaranteed, only the ability to pursue it as we see fit.

Hey you up there in the cheap seats. If you're still following along, here's a synopsis of my brief foray into change:

- Change is inevitable.
- Change can surprise us because we're trying so hard to control the outcome of things.
- Real change comes mostly through pain.
- Pain brings us to our knees and creates willingness.
- To find willingness, we must surrender control.
- Thus, we create space for something new. Something unexpected and beautiful and outside of our control.

I feel very fortunate to have found my point of surrender in 2009 because of my intervention, subsequent treatment, and recovery since. There are so many things in our current culture that I cannot imagine having to navigate as a younger man with a less secure foundation. My early foundation was built in stone in a loving and close family. I had church. I had school. I had Boy Scouts. I had coaches and teams. And yet—I still got off track. That's the insidious power of alcohol. My recovery foundation is built on a different kind of base. It's just as strong, but it's not as immovable. It was constructed with the balsa wood of failure, shame, and defeat. The utter and complete vanquishing of "my way" was essential to my physical survival, and to my ability to change emotionally and spiritually. I had to demolish it to construct anew.

There was an impactful counselor I had for a time in early recovery. *"How ya feeling there Rambeau? It's hard for a guy like you to be on his knees, isn't it?"*

My appropriate response back then was likely an expletive hurled her direction. But she was right. I was a guy who had captained every sports team I'd ever been on. Led one to a national championship. I'd had entrepreneurial success. I knew what hard work was. I knew what it meant to knuckle down and experience sacrifice and pain. I knew what it took. But I did not know how to surrender to another way of thinking or being. Absolutely not.

She had a great story to tell in these situations. It went something like this—OK tough guy you climb over the ropes into the ring with Mike Tyson. What happens? You get knocked out. Guys like you—they climb back in and think they can try it a different way. He knocks you out again. Rinse and repeat. At some point you refuse to or simply cannot get back in the ring. Make sense?

I'm not any more inclined to surrender these days. Understanding it doesn't make it any easier to do. What I am inclined to these days is to entertain a different way. My stubbornness might still require a bit of evidence and convincing, but I'll likely come around to a strong argument. That, my friends, is progress. And that is what we seek. Progress—not perfection.

Other essays about recovery and human behavior can be found at:
Deerambeau.substack.com
October, 2023

Dee Rambeau is a seasoned entrepreneur and business generalist with 20 years in sports television, and 20 years in media software development. A passionate volunteer and donor supporting dog rescue with 4 of his own, he also works to heal the horrible disease of addiction as a member of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation Philanthropy Board. Dee hosts a weekly radio show called the "The Empowered Community" on his community radio station. His mindful pursuits include recovery, fitness and wellness, travel, motorcycles, and golf. He is currently writing two books and publishes essays at deerambeau.substack.



The Healing Path

By Dan Quinlan

"Finding our way along the healing path does not consist of striving for some far-off goal that we may or may not attain but is rather a way of discovering a secret hidden deep within our hearts."

— James Finley

This past October we spent 90-minutes in a LumZoom on-line gathering with the wise and wonderful writer, therapist, and spiritual teacher Jim Finley. Built upon a lifetime studying spiritual teachers across many faiths, his years as a novice monk guided by Thomas Merton, immersion into Zen Buddhism, re-immersion into Christian theology, and his decades of work as a trauma therapist, Jim circled around one message: figuring out how to live a contemplative life is the only path to spiritual wisdom. Like all great teachers, he pointed at ideas and provided suggestions about how to do that. Then he encouraged us to "little by little, walk our walk" – to lean into the unique journey waiting for each of us.

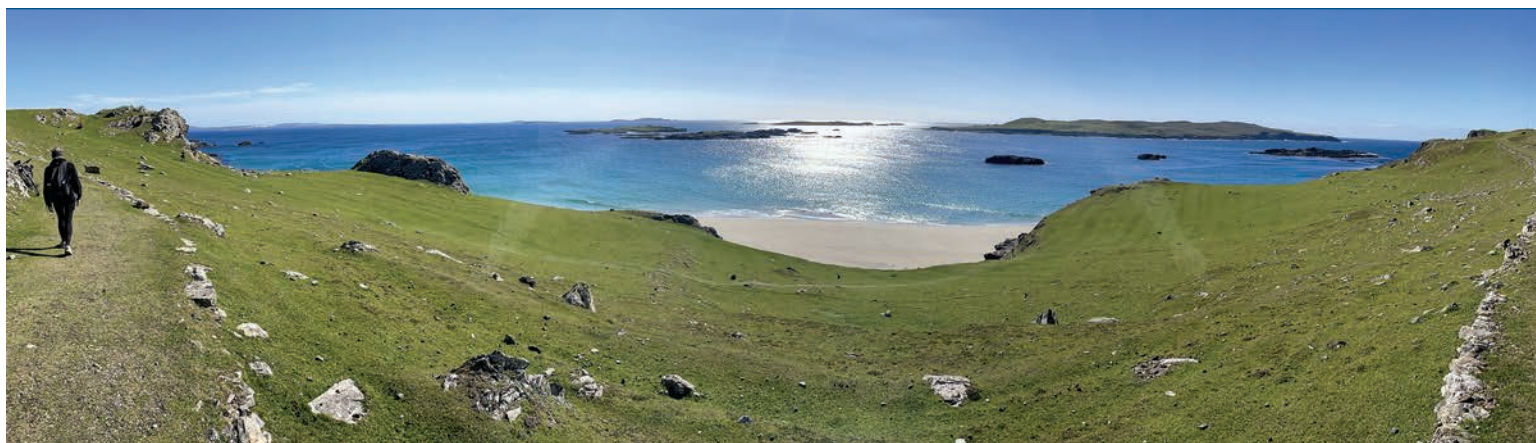
John O'Donohue once said that "Great thinkers put their eye to the earth at a strange angle." Offering his own life as a case study in his new book "The Healing Path," Jim talks about many angles. He describes deeply traumatic personal experiences, a

dysfunctional marriage, and the loss of a great spiritual partnership – interspersed with luminous moments of spiritual breakthrough.¹ As we experienced during the LumZoom event, the combination of his warm smile, the twinkle in his eye, and the resonant quality of his voice leavens his ideas. With an astounding ability to move seamlessly between down-to-earth theology, insights from the world of psychotherapy, and wildly creative poetic metaphors, Jim's angles help the rest of us find our angles.

With the first draft of this article I set out to try to describe some Finley angles – my thoughts on his thoughts. After letting that percolate for a couple days, I realized there was a much better approach: get out of the way and let you hear from Jim directly (along with a bit of his mentor Merton). So, the following is a short 'mash-up' meandering through some of his teachings. Let's start with Jim's description of "The Healing Path".

"These reflections mark out a path, a way of life in which we as human beings may be healed from all that hinders us from experiencing the steady, strong currents of divinity to flow on and on in the bittersweet alchemy of our lives...How I put it poetically is that when you're in the dark place where you can't even find yourself in your own life, if you don't panic, you discover that there's a kind of a luminosity to the darkness. And you also discover you're not alone, that a presence is coming and looking for you. And then, as it leads you back out into the light ... and then you know how important it is not to forget

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what you learned in the darkness about vulnerability and God's oneness with us – as a very deep layer of spiritual wisdom and tenderheartedness in the world.”²

When speaking about living a contemplative life, Jim often talks about the “cosmic dance” – an idea he heard directly from Merton: “If we could let go of our own obsession with what we think is the meaning of it all, we might be able to hear [God's] call and follow Him in His mysterious cosmic dance...No despair of ours can alter the reality of things, or stain the joy of the cosmic dance which is always there. Indeed, we are in the midst of it and it is in the midst of us, for it beats in our very blood, whether we want it to or not. Yet the fact remains that we are invited to forget ourselves on purpose, cast our awful solemnity to the winds and join in the general dance.”³

“There's a dance of being awake and being asleep, of being alone and being with others. It's a dance of being seen and understood, and not seen and understood at all. There's a dance of being happy and being sad. There's a dance of feeling so happy you think you're finally beginning to understand the spiritual dimension, and then this part where you don't think you ever will. The dance of being confused and having clarity, going back and forth...It's like God forever comes to visit, but we're rarely at home. We're probably out buying a spiritual book or getting in an argument with somebody about God.”

“The contemplative way of life is so called because it's the way of life devoted to the cultivation of contemplative experience. That's our starting place. To contemplate means to observe carefully, to pay close attention. Most of the things that we notice, we notice in passing, on our way to something else. Then, every so often, something gives us reason to pause. Something catches our eye or draws our attention, and we're drawn for a moment to ponder or to reflect on that which awakened us in this way.”⁴

“Without warning, we find ourselves falling into the abyss of a star-strewn sky or find our heart impaled by a child's laughter or the unexpected appearance of the beloved's face. Without warning we lose our footing in the broken silence and, in the breaking, deepened by the splash of a frog we did not know was there...What is so extraordinary about such moments is that nothing beyond the ordinary is present. It is just a starlit sky, a child at play. It is just the primal stuff of life that has unexpectedly broken through the mesh of opinions and concerns that all too

often hold us in a spell...Here, in this unforeseen defenselessness, is granted the contemplative experience, however obscure it might be, that we are the cosmic dance of God.”

“We know by experience that in a relative, but very real sense, we are the arbiters of our journey, that we must take responsibility to cooperate with the grace of being faithful to our contemplative practices. If we do not patiently work through the obstacles encountered along the way, we can lose our way and lose ourselves in the process. But at a deeper level, the entire journey is one in which we are called over-and-over again to surrender to a self-transforming process not of our own making. Each time we give ourselves over to our contemplative practices, whatever they might be, we find ourselves, once again, one with the communal mystery in which there is no separate self...Contemplative wisdom discerns that we hinder ourselves in our ongoing self-transformation when we catch ourselves expounding, through clenched teeth, the principles of the dance that our own self-absorbed rigidity will not let us dance.”⁵

As an incoming member of Richard Rohr's “Living School” in 2019, my introduction to Jim was a talk he gave to our class during our first day together. Two years later when I graduated as a “DBP” (aka “Disciple of the Big Picture” – the school's final elbow in the ribs reminder to not take oneself too seriously), it was clear that, by some miracle, I had spent two years in the presence of a truly enlightened and holy person. Jim's words and kindness had created a slowly-evolving ‘alchemy’ within my head and my heart. With Jim's voice echoing in my head, little by little by little I walk my walk every day. This article is part of my attempt to repay that gift. And so, I'll offer a suggestion: go to the Center for Action and Contemplation website (www.cac.org) and find some of Jim's writing and his podcast. If you take the time to do that, maybe you too will find something beautiful and inspiring behind that twinkle in Jim's eyes?

Dan Quinlan is the Lumunos Business and Operations Director.

¹ James Finley, “The Healing Path” (Orbis Books, 2023)

² Lumunos LumZoom event, October 2023

³ Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New Directions, 1961)

⁴ Adapted from James Finley, *Turning to the Mystics: Virtual Retreat*, day 2 (Center for Action and Contemplation, 2022).

⁵ James Finley, *The Contemplative Heart* (Sorin Books, 2000)

Lullabye

by Cris Williamson

“Like a ship in the harbor
Like a mother and child
Like a light in the darkness
I’ll hold you awhile
We’ll rock on the water
I’ll cradle you deep
And I’ll hold you while angels
Sing you to sleep.”



Through the years, Lumunos has remained vibrant in an ever-changing world because of the community of people who have been part of our work. We have been blessed by these “Lumunaries.” Lumunaries are people who embody the values of Lumunos – people who are using their gifts and living their call (or figuring out how to do so); people who value authentic relationships and continue to grow spiritually. Lumunaries are also people who have supported Lumunos and advanced our mission in one way or the other.

“Sassy and classy”, curious Kay shines bright through Lumunos and the lives of those she encountered throughout her life. As former Executive Director, Marjory Zoet Bankson affirmed about Kay, “She helped to weave that web of relationships with her love and dedication, always faithful to the call that brought her there in the beginning.”

When Kay passed in Summer 2023, her family and friends gathered in her honor and to pay their respects. While some of her dearest friends may not have originally decided to wear black (then thinking that Kay would have wanted them in full colors of celebration) it was her daughter that reminded them that Kay would have wanted it to be called a “funeral” and that was that. Rooted in honor, elevated in the spirit of enduring love.

From her daughter, Katherine Campbell, “I’ve been hearing

about Faith At Work (now Lumunos) since I was about 12, and I am now 50 years

old. It wasn’t until I was about 30 that I started to grasp the value of this community for my mom. We didn’t talk much about faith or God or her healing processes prior to that. It was when she was asked to be the speaker at the southeast conference in Washington DC that it dawned on me. I drove over from the shore of Virginia where I was living, to meet her and go to the National Museum of the American Indian. I loved going to museums with her due to her vast range of knowledge, but I appreciated her questions even more. “How do you think they used that tool? What do you think the women wore at night?” It was always a barrage of specific thought-provoking questions with my mom, a.k.a. “Mrs. Campbell.” The teacher was always present and active. But on this particular trip she was on cloud nine due to the speaking engagement. I mean, floating above the earth with elation kind of excitement including the high-pitched voice, flailing hands in the air, uplifted eyebrows and all. At the heart of all this energy was that she felt so honored and humbled to be giving a part of herself

Kay pondered with Sunder about the soul, like her planted flowers, being annual or perennial. They bantered over the view that the horizon sinking was not the end of the world. Sunder articulated with great peace and certainty that her sun continues to shine on all the lives she touched.

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to the community that had given her so much. That same FAW community continued to give back to her in her deepest time of need this past year while she was sick. This time, I was an eyewitness to it and had another epiphany shortly after some of the most generous and thoughtful women stepped in to help my mom. Faith At Work was literally faith at work. My mom always said that actions speak louder than words."

Kay grew up in Grosse Pointe, Michigan and later moved to Chattanooga where she graduated from The University of Tennessee in 1964. Later that year she wed David F. Campbell and they lived briefly in Royal Oaks, Michigan. In 1966 they moved to Atlanta due to David's architecture career, and she began her lifelong career as an educator. Her first teaching position was at The Westminster Schools, where she eventually returned to during retirement to substitute teach. During her career, she also taught at Georgia State University, Gupton Jones College, St. Anne's Episcopal School, and The Trinity School. Several Atlanta area generations knew "Mrs. Campbell" as being a passionate, dedicated, and humorous teacher. However, her teaching extended beyond the school systems. Kay was also deeply involved with Faith At Work for over 30 years and led several of their Southeast conferences.

Long-time dear friend, her "sister" Erma Cooke met Kay when Lumunos was called "Faith at Work". Kay - an extrovert - and Erma - more an introvert then than now - were destined for friendship. In the Faith at Work retreats, she was the face up front and Erma was the behind-the-scenes problem-solver. Erma would call her in the fall and get them started on the planning, priorities and people for the coming February. They would talk on and off over the winter and make sure they were both on track with tasks for the event. Her yearly question to Erma was "Are you coming to give or receive this year?" Mostly it would be to give and then after the retreat in our wrap up calls, they would revisit the question and find that they both gave and received, but mostly received. During these times, Kay also held space for women who were coming out as lesbians within the Faith at Work community - a supportive position that appeared natural for her, despite the pushback and criticisms of others during this time where many LGBTQIA+ individuals were met with common societal persecution impacting their safety.

Kay was known as a friend who cared. One who listened. One who challenged others to "be gentle" with themselves, particularly during times of transition. Kay's light was carried into Lumunos through a commitment to serve and the value of relationships. Kay was a woman of substance and came from a background of privilege in many ways, but had a special influence on those who came from different backgrounds and who were trying to receive an education, in doing the best they could. She didn't pull punches. What you saw is what you got. She had the ability to let someone voice the difference, acknowledge it, and affirm without bending her values. For Kay, she saw people's lives changing. *When you teach and see lives change, it keeps you teaching.*

Another long-time friend, Sunder, reflects on Kay's life with a natural joy exuding from his every word. His hearty laugh, even over the phone, felt like the warmth of the sun as he expressed his

joy in having known Kay. During his days as a tailor and having been from India, Sunder was in a new world of experience in the US when he met Kay. In Asheville, NC when he first arrived, walking down the street someone from the radio station was interviewing and he was picked. The question? "Who made the Taj Mahal?" Kay dispelled cultural myths and stereotypes in the way that she asked questions and listened to the answers of this "alien" man. Thus, the "alien" man felt most at home, with a connection that was blind to cultural construct. During their meals and visits together, Kay made a significant impact on Sunder. A seemingly lost friendship over the process of decades, they reunited prior to Kay's death and discovered that they had even made mutual friends during their time apart.

As Kay closed each Faith at Work event with "All I Ask of You" cards, ALL I ASK OF YOU IS FOREVER TO REMEMBER ME AS LOVING YOU.

Heather Bauer is the Outreach and Engagement Director for Lumunos and currently resides in Waynesville, NC with her partner, daughter, and two rescue dogs.

“ My mom always said that actions speak louder than words. ”

— Kay's daughter, Katherine Campbell,



When Kay told Sunder that she had heard people lived up in the trees in India, he replied with a twinkle, "You haven't heard wrong". During this time of concern with war brewing between the USSR and America, civil rights at its peak, threats between different religious groups, and other extreme tensions, she continued her quest to remember that the world was not as small as its view. Sunder recalls fondly her "presence of mind", even in their final gathering.

Advent Reflections, 2023 (Year B in the Revised Common Lectionary)

This year's reflections pair verses from traditional Advent readings with quotations from relatively modern luminaries—an astronomer, two poets, and an actor. As we move through the next few darkening weeks and arrive at Christmas, perhaps their dialogue can help shine a light on the things that call to us here at the end of 2023.

Advent 1 (3 December 2023). KEEP AWAKE.

Mark 13:37: *"And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."*

Carl Sagan: *"Our species needs, and deserves, a citizenry with minds wide awake...."*

Slang for "awake," the word "woke" originated in African American vernacular at the end of the last century. Example: "I was asleep, but then the phone rang and now I'm woke." In the last two decades, its usage has evolved. Being "woke" is now less about literal, physical waking from sleep and more about how much someone is attuned to social issues. Merriam-Webster currently defines "woke" as "aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice)." One might say that being "woke" is a particular kind of keeping awake and alert.

These days, "woke" is a freighted word that can arouse strong feelings—which is part of what makes it a word worth pondering at this time of year. For even as the days grow shorter and darker and much of the natural world seems to sleep, Advent calls us to be awake—and yes, maybe even to be "woke." Advent especially calls us to be awake to the possibility of God's coming into our midst, with all the ramifications that such a coming has for social, racial, political, economic, and environmental justice. Those things require change: change in ourselves, change in our understanding of who God is and what God does, change in how we regard others, and change in how we pay attention and respond to the world around us.

In what aspects of your life are you already awake and alert? In what ways might Advent be calling you to be even more deeply "woke"?

Advent 2 (10 December 2023). GOOD NEWS

Mark 1:1. *The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.*

Emily Dickinson: *"A word is dead when it is said some say. But I say it just begins to live that day."*

Words have power. Words bearing good news can dispel tension, help deepen our breathing, and offer hope. Words conveying bad news can constrict our breathing, weigh us down, sap our energy. Moreover, as Emily Dickinson suggests, words—and their effects—can last long after the moment in which they are spoken. That's true of words bringing good news as well as bad.

While we cannot stick our heads in the sand and pretend there

is no bad news to contend with, perhaps during this Advent season we can modulate how much time and energy we give to the unnecessary consumption—and repeating—of bad news. And so I'm not going to remind you of the many woeful stories in today's headlines but rather tell you some good news I've read, experienced, or learned recently:

- Globally: Microforests (small, dense forests with biodiversity) are proving to be powerful in combating climate change. (Google it to read how amazing they are!)
- Locally: A group of neighbors from both parties, objecting to a county tourism proposal, have united—and have succeeded in at least getting some members of our Board of Supervisors to take our concerns seriously.
- Personally: After a prior attempt to get together was stymied by Covid, a dozen or so college classmates have set a date to gather for three days in Virginia Beach. It will be so good to be with old friends!

Good news isn't always found in momentous things. Often it comes as a kind word or compliment from a stranger, as an offer of help or encouragement from a friend, or as an insight gleaned from something heard or read. What good news has come to you this week? How are you spreading good news to those you encounter, both friends and strangers?

Advent 3 (17 December 2023). BEING WORTHY.

John 1:27. *"I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal."*

W. E. B. Du Bois: *"A true and worthy ideal frees and uplifts a people; a false ideal imprisons and lowers."*

The word "worthy" often has a sharp side, because deeming something as worthy involves human judgment—and the criteria underpinning human judgments are not always clear or consistent. At our best, we may try to ground our thinking about worthiness in explicit, appropriate, and fair criteria. However, unexamined and unconscious biases can skew our judgment, as can criteria that are capriciously applied. Even our calculations about our own worthiness may be inaccurate—overly modest on the one hand or self-serving and self-aggrandizing on the other.

This third week of Advent is a good time to ponder who we deem to be worthy—worthy of tangible things like shelter, healthy food, and clean water, and worthy of intangible things like respect, justice, or forgiveness. Who is worthy of medical help or financial assistance? Who is worthy of time or attention? Are we ourselves worthy of such things?

American scholar and poet W. E. B. Dubois suggests that what makes a human value worthy is whether it "frees and uplifts"

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or “imprisons and lowers.” The same could be said of human judgments. Do our beliefs and values imprison or free us? Do our judgments about others lower them or help lift them up? Are there things all people are worthy of simply because they are human? Are there things no one is truly worthy of—but which, when given, we nonetheless gratefully receive?

Advent 4 (24 December 2022). DO NOT BE AFRAID

Luke 1:30. *The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”*

Ruby Dee: *“The greatest gift is not being afraid to question.”*

There is scarcely anything more motivating, manipulative, or addictive than fear. Politicians know this when they try to make us afraid of each other. Aware that fear releases the neurotransmitter dopamine, the so-called “feel good hormone,” talking heads on cable news stoke our fears—to hook us into returning to their alarmist programming night after night. Advertisers also harness fear’s power. If we drive their car, take their pill, use their cosmetics, or purchase their alarm system, we can dodge misfortune—and be confident, healthy and wealthy, beautiful, secure.

How easy to slip into the grip of fear, and what a challenge to let go of it. But the latter is what Advent asks of us. Its wholly counter-cultural message, *Do not be afraid*, invites us to question our fears and their sway over us. “Do we really need to be afraid of that?” we might ask ourselves whenever we feel afraid. If the answer is Yes, other questions remain. Is our fear reasonable? Is it worthy? Why or why not? What might it be calling us to do? Where is God in our fear?

There are always things to be afraid of. That was as true in first century Bethlehem as it is today. Despite her fears, Mary agreed to take a risk. As a result, a baby was born—and with his birth, love came into the world anew. We too are called, as Mary was called, to bear love rather than fear into the world—into both the physical worlds in which we live and the interior worlds of our hearts and minds. How might we prepare ourselves to be like Mary, so that when the angel whispers into our ear, “Do not be afraid,” we find a way to choose love?

Angier Brock is a former long-time board member of Lumunos, songwriter, and women’s ministry leader. These days she is doing some freelance writing and editing, birding, being a Virginia Master Naturalist, and grandmothering.

Affirming Words

“Thanks to Lumunos - SOOO MUCH!!! For giving us this rich encounter [of the Jim Finley event]. I have been seeing offerings from Jim Finley via so many services, such as Richard Rohr and Spirituality & Practice. But I never took advantage of the offer until now... Words cannot express how much this webinar meant to me and helped me look back on events of my own life... Many blessings to all of you at Lumunos, who contribute to our lives in so many ways.” – Chris V., Participant

“I have had the great privilege of a long-lasting history with Lumunos. It has been a steadying hand through the ups and downs of my life. One of the things that attracted me to this organization is the relaxed, friendly, and even gentle style of the staff, facilitators, and events.” – Tom Pappas, Stewardship Mission Committee

“Like many of you, the daily dance of responsibility for me, is a mix of art and comedy. I am a mom, a spouse, a friend, a member of Montview Presbyterian Church, a professional in the wellness industry and an active member of service within my community. I am also a new member of the Lumunos board. I am very excited to see how Lumunos encourages us to stay passionate and curious about our purpose and calling in life. Given my many roles, and wanting to embrace this “dance”, I especially appreciate the emphasis on balancing self care with all the ways I try to serve in the world.”
– Erin Chain, Board Member

“I have enjoyed participating in Lumunos offerings for many years. I love the content that is offered, and find that the information is so very helpful to me in my everyday living. The instructors are always well informed and engaging. I especially enjoy the small group conversation that is usually encouraged on most LumZoom events. It is such a treat to interact with interesting people from all over the country, and I learn so much from the opinions /learnings /teachings of my fellow attendees. Keep up the good work!”
– Gwen M., Participant

As the upcoming changes for Lumunos are nearing, the Board is engaged in the search for a new Executive Director.

We are hoping to find a dynamic leader who can smoothly transition into the role with Doug Wysocky-Johnson’s guidance. Doug has been the heart and soul of Lumunos for a very long time now, and we are very grateful for his leadership. We hope that his continuing involvement in the program aspects of Lumunos over the next year will allow a new leader to learn the ropes while bringing his/her own talents to the job. We are also very grateful for the Bauer grant that is funding the Lumunos Brighter project. This helps support increased staffing to smooth the transition while bolstering the impact Lumunos makes in the world. If you know of someone who has a passion for the Lumunos mission and strong organizational skills to develop a sustainable future for Lumunos, please put them in touch with Linda Rumbarger at lrumbarg@hotmail.com.

Events

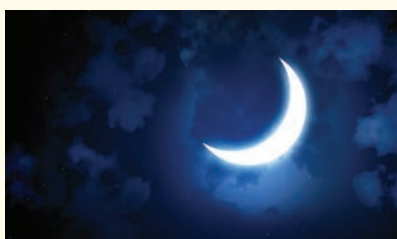
We love to hear from participants about their experiences in our events. We welcome your insights and look forward to your joining us! Email your questions or comments to: heather@lumunos.org



WOMEN BECOMING

► First Wednesday of the month at 12 PM EDT

Online Zoom Book Club
Stories of Women Becoming Their Authentic Selves
Led by Becca Perry-Hill
Find out more at: www.lumunos.org/wbbookclub



MYSTICS FOR EVERYDAY LIVING

► Second Wednesday of the month 7-8:30 PM ET

Drop-In Series
Led by Dan Quinlan and Betsy Perry



ONGOING PROGRAMMING

Lumunos facilitates programming throughout the year based on an annual theme that fosters a sense of connection, purpose and calling through virtual gatherings, keynote speakers, and events.

From LumZooms to in-person gatherings, visit us at www.lumunos.org/upcoming for more information.

"The sorrow is great. Let us learn to love greater-riotous, expansive love, love so rooted, so common, we almost forget the world could look any other way."

— Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer,
"More Love, More Love"
- All the Honey

"I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more."

— Anne Frank,
Diary of Anne Frank



Loaves and Fishes At Lumunos, a Loaves and Fishes gift is made in honor or memory of someone important to you. Please join many others who have made a Loaves and Fishes gift by checking the appropriate box on our giving envelope, or selecting it online under "My Donations is for" and entering the name of the honored individual in the "comments" box. We will contact you if we have any questions! www.lumunos.org/make-a-donation



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*"Only between one person and another
can the renewal of our world begin."*

— Sharon Salzberg, *The Kindness Handbook*



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